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THREE
LIVE GHOSTS
FREDERIC S. ISHAM



THREE LIVE GHOSTS

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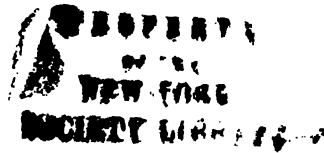
Three Live Ghosts

By

FREDERIC S. ISHAM

Author of

**NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH, THIS WAY OUT
ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY, etc.**

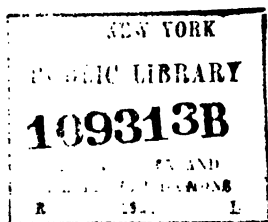


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THREE LIVE GHOSTS

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Three Live Ghosts

CHAPTER I

THREE men paused by the wayside. One looked yellowish; another, a sickly green; the third, white as paper—in spots, where the grime permitted a glimpse of his real hue. All were shaky.

“You can all go to ’ell,” said the greenish little man, shaking a fist in the direction from whence they had come.

“Hymn of hate!” said the yellowish man in a tone that had always been nonchalant. “’ear ’im!” Mockingly. “’apless ’arry!”

“You go to ’ell too!” said the greenish man.

“Thank you,” said the yellow ghost. “Don’t try to shake your fist. Hold it up, and it’ll shake itself.”

And truly the other was shaking all over.

The yellowish man gave a metallic laugh. “’apless ’arry, giving a hex’ibition of ’ysterics!” he scoffed, preempting the other’s accent.

The little cockney wraith swore awfully. White-patches spat.

"You leave him alone," he said listlessly.

"Or—?"

"Oh, hell!" said White-patches. "Haven't I had enough scrapping, without licking you? I absolutely refuse to lick any old son of a gun, or son of a lord, for that matter!"

The yellowish one bowed with much grace, at the moment looking very much like a Doré grotesque.

"Thanks, old top!" he murmured, his irony seeming to sweep back from generations of ancestors. A cold gust of air passed over them, and the cockney hunched a thin shoulder.

"Gawd!" he said. "'ere we is, sying what, when we ought to go down on our knees, and lift hup our 'ands to 'eaven!"

Neither responded to this, White-patches standing as if not hearing, while the yellow man passively eyed a bird—a mournful, solitary-looking little bird.

The cockney let out a blubber. "You chaps ayn't 'uman, you ayn't."

They looked at him oddly. Such a demonstrative little cockney!



"Haw, haw!" laughed the son of a lord, mirthlessly.

"You think he's a funny little duffer?" said White-patches.

"Don't you?"

"About as funny as you!" said the other. "And you're about as funny as a hole in the ground."

"Don't talk about holes in the ground!" pleaded the little cockney.

They looked at him, with a far-away, curious pity.

"'ere's nothing but 'eaven over'ead!" he muttered.

"Heaven!" They stared.

"Ayn't he the sweet little young lady?" mocked the son of a lord. "Got any like him, in the States?"

But the American—White-patches—did not answer directly. "He's my pal," was all he said.

"Oh, of course," said the yellow son of a lord indifferently. No doubt about that! Hadn't they lived, about fifty years in two, together? "Lived?" Well, clung to this mortal coil!—desperately; wretchedly!—as shipwrecked men to a bit of wreckage!

Suddenly the little cockney, overcome by a species of hysteria, or emotion, fell to his knees.

"If you say 'Haw, haw!'" said the American sharply, even truculently, to the son of a lord, "I shall go to the trouble of knocking off your ancestral block!"

The other, quite unmoved by this awful threat, leveled at the speaker a monocleless look.

"I quite fail to understand. You seem to forget I'm a Church of England man," he drawled.

"Sometimes," said the American, pursing his brows, "I think I've got your measure, and sometimes I don't."

"What does it matter?" inquired the other smoothly.

"Doesn't," assented the American.

"Then why worry?" asked his lordship, with the shadow of a smile.

"Don't!" shot back the American brusily. Worry? Ha! ha! Of course, they had long ceased to worry, or thought they had.

"I suppose," said the American, "that talking is just a habit." As he spoke, he yawned and turned. "You fellows can do what you please, but I'm going *en respos*. If any one disturbs me for about ten hours, I think I will kill him. If you don't want to wait—?"

"If—?"

"You can jolly well go to the devil!"

And White-patches laid down, he wasn't particular where—for one gets accustomed to mire—and soon he slept, motionless as an image on a tomb—a marble image that time has grievously begrimed! A moment the son of a lord, moved by this example, swayed uncertainly, then he, too, dropped. The cockney's tired face, however, yet sought the heavens, but even that incongruous impulse of thanksgiving was soon swallowed up in the weariness of the flesh, and the little man, flopping earthward, now with snores assailed the heavens.

The beatitude of rest! Forgetfulness of the ills of the flesh! Divine oblivion! That patch of earth, a couch, celestial!

A woman and child passed along, the former vast, Hollandish; the latter like a dot on the road. Both seemed to have stepped out of a canvas of Hals into this real world, and now to pause at the unwonted sight presented at the wayside.

"Oh!" said the child, her small mouth a circle, as she stood to gaze at the three disreputables.

"Escaped prisoners!" said the woman suddenly. Often they drifted over, just as forlornly; sometimes, more so! She gazed stolidly.

The circle of the child's mouth, however, dis-

solved into smiles. What big, funny rag-dolls! she thought. And what funny "talking" dolls! Such snores! And how one of them twisted and jerked! The little cockney was certainly a very funny rag-doll.

"Must have just got here," said the woman impassively.

The child wanted to touch the funny, jumping rag-doll, but the woman held her back.

"Huh!" she said, staring. There were suspicious, gruesome spots on the rags of two of the three, implying it might not have been so easy to "get over," and at this sight, the woman heaved a Gargantuan sigh. Mere curiosity fled; womanly pity took its place, as reaching in her basket she extracted a loaf and three dried herring which she left on the ground. Then she took the child's hand, to move on.

"No, no!" the latter did not want to go. What? —leave the queer-talking rag-dolls?

But a big hand dragged at a small wrist; the big hand was not to be resisted, and the two gradually receded, the child ever looking back, until finally lost to sight. Now afar, a windmill revolved. Otherwise the landscape presented no sign of motion. Time passed. The little cockney evidently,

had bad dreams, for he continued to twitch and wriggle—suddenly starting up with a jump!

“Let me ’it the—etc., etc.!” he yelled.

The son of a lord, thus disturbed, cocked an ill-natured eye at him. “I say!” he remarked, with sleepy protest.

“Stick the—etc., etc.!” raved the cockney.

Whereupon, White-patches yawned. “Thinks he’s just had his tot of rum, and is going over, to settle the whole blamed shooting-match all by himself, I guess,” he remarked, with a frown.

“Bally nuisance, I call it!” said the son of a lord peevishly.

The cockney, having thus interrupted the blissful slumbers of his two companions, now condescended to subside. “That’s the ’ell of it,” he muttered gloomily, and looking greener than ever. “A cove can’t even ’ave all ’is sleep in peace.”

“No?” said the son of a lord ironically. “Why not? Your own fault, I should say! Is not the spot idyllic? The sun, too, now is warmer.”

“I ’as a mother,” said the cockney plaintively, “and I was thinking of ’er in my sleep, before I ’ad that ’orrid dream.”

“Used to call you her blessed little angel, when you slept, I suppose,” observed the son of a lord.

"'ow'd you know?"

"They're all alike," said the American.

"Hangels?"

"Mothers."

"It weren't blessed little hangel," said the cockney, with tender reminiscent tone. "It were 'ell-roaring little hangel. 'er had a wye of expressing 'erself, especially when she'd 'ad a pint or two!"

"Charming childhood recollections!" said his lordship languidly. "God! but I'm hungry."

"I could eat dirt," said White-patches fervently.

The son of a lord made a face. "Haven't we had almost two years of that?"

The cockney, finding further sleep impossible, looked around, and as he did so, his eye alighted on something—or some things, most apropos! He could hardly believe—

"Manna!" he yelled.

"Off his blooming top!" said the son of a lord.

"Manna, from 'eaven!"

"Sit on him," said White-patches. "Why can't you behave yourself?" he added in an injured tone.

But the cockney only waved his arms. "Loaves and fishes from 'eaven! 'aven't I 'eard about them? General Booth—the army—salvation—Whitechapel—I, a sinner— Wash me white as—"

"Some washing!" said the American.

The cockney seized upon the loaf and three fishes. "A miracle! As I'm a sinner—"

"*Is* it a dream?" said the now half-convinced son of a lord.

"Looks O. K.!" remarked the American.

"A bloomin' miracle! Wash me in the blood of—"

"Shut up!" said his lordship wearily.

"Eat!" said the American practically.

At first they had some difficulty separating the cockney from the loaf which he appeared personally desirous of preempting, in a spirit of vast spiritual exaltation, but this they at length accomplished by not too ungentle means.

"Miracle be blowed!" said his lordship, breaking the loaf in three parts.

"'asn't I heard General Booth sye: 'Arsk and it shall be given.' And if it ayn't from 'eaven, I'd like to know 'ow—?"

"Look!" His lordship pointed to the damp ground.

"Heavenly footprints," said White-patches ironically.

"More like elephants' tootsies—those!" indicating the larger ones.

"Might have cut our throats!" muttered the cockney.

"Guess you forget we're not back there!" laughed the American, jerking his thumb toward the land they had left behind them. At that the others laughed, too—oddly—strangely! Could it be true? Or was it too good to be true?

They ate ravenously and drank from a ditch.

"Whither now?"—almost blithely observed White-patches, when they had concluded with the loaf and fishes.

"Why not continue to contaminate this spot for a while?" murmured his lordship.

"You mean, another snooze?"

"I think I could sleep forever," said his lordship, and lay back. The others followed suit, and now even the little cockney slept well.

CHAPTER II

A FEW days later found the three oddly assorted "pals" sitting in a public-house, in an English watering place. The yellow one—called by the others "his lordship"—was a shade less bilious; the cockney, known principally as "Jimmie," was a trifle less green, while the American knight of the white-patches looked decidedly less "spotty." But they were all still very shaky. Moreover, they wore clothes that didn't fit, though the English consul, back there in the land of windmills and canals, no doubt had done his best, out of his private purse, to outfit them properly. But though convivially occupied, in a convivial place, were they happy? They did not seem so. Gloom masked their features; joy seemed to have departed from their lives.

"Ayn't it a joke?" muttered the cockney, lugubriously.

"Gone west!" echoed his lordship dismally.

"Officially dead!" croaked the American.

"Perhaps the government will tell me I ayn't

tasting it?" said the cockney, with his nose in the uplifted pot of bitters.

"Haw, haw!" said his lordship, with a sepulchral laugh.

"Is it a joke?" said the cockney reproachfully.

"Ain't it it?" said the American, as if trying to pull himself together. "Might as well try to look on the bright side!"

"'ear 'im!" said Jimmie, the cockney, bitterly. "Tyking it that calm!"

"R. I. P." now laughed the American. "Rest in pieces!"

"A bloody shyme, I call it," said the cockney. "Gives me the shivers, it do."

His lordship twitched. His drooping spirits seemed to catch the infection of the American's tone. "Oh, I don't know. The situation has its advantages. No responsibilities, and all that—What?"

"I'd rather 'ave responsibilities, and be alive," said the cockney in a nasty tone.

"No suiting him!" said the American.

The cockney buried his nose once more in the pot. "They calls this *comin' 'ome*," he murmured bitterly. "Blighly!"

"Are we down-hearted?" suddenly giped the son of a lord.

"What ails the little man?" asked the barmaid, curiously eying Jimmie.

"Just rehearsing a little part, miss! Amateur theatricals!"

"Oh," she said. "I has heard they has them in the trenches."

"He's cast for the heavy villain—"

"'old yer lip!" said the cockney fiercely.

The son of a lord yawned. One doesn't choose one's pals. One has them thrust upon one. He was mildly amused. Poor little blighter! It *had* been a disappointment.

"You see, he expected to return like a hero," his lordship started to explain when the barmaid floated toward other customers.

"You coves 'as no 'earts," said the cockney, stung by this levity. "After goin' through 'eat and cold, and 'unger and darkness, and sickness and 'ell!—and then to be larfed at!"

"Awh cut it," said the American. "What's the use?"

"Haw, haw!" said his lordship. He was feeling quite a bit better, now he could laugh at Jimmie.

The little cockney talked to his beer, breathing his words into the sympathetic depths of the pot: " 'ere I am, sir; come to report,' says I to the sergeant. And gives 'im the nyme and the company! 'Most two years a prisoner, and managed to escape, sir, after goin' through 'ell, sir, for my king and country.' W'ot 'appened? I arks you. Does 'e fall on my neck? 'e does not! Does 'e grip me by the 'and, and call me a 'ero? 'e does not! 'I've come for my back pay,' says I. 'Six 'undred king's shillings and more!' 'Back pay?' 'e says, after consulting the lists. 'There ayn't no back pay for you. There ayn't *no* pay for you!' 'And why not?' 'You're pushing up the daisies,' says 'e. 'Look 'ere! It's down in black and white—officially dead!' says 'e."

"Well, we're all in the same boat," observed the American. "Didn't I get the same song and dance? And his lordship, too?"

"Haw, haw!" said his lordship.

" 'Pushin' up the daisies, is it? " went on the cockney, still addressing the sympathetic pot. " 'I'd rather be pushing up a pot, sir.' 'You can't,' says 'e. 'Lend me a quid,' says I. 'You couldn't tyke it,' says 'e. 'And why not?' says I. 'You 'aven't

a mortal 'and to tyke it with,' says 'e. And turned with a larf! And so I turned away too! And cruel 'ard it is, I sye, after goin' through 'eat and cold, and 'unger and 'ell—"

"That maker of the official records should be given the V. C.," said the American lightly.

"Very careless," said his lordship.

"One and six," said the barmaid, exhibiting a slight anxiety.

His lordship tossed a crown on the table. "At least, I was more fortunate than you," he said to the cockney. "A corporal loaned me ten bob."

"Hurra!" said the American. After all, there was something to be thankful for. "Don't spend it all here!"

"What shall we do now?" said his lordship, as he got up. "Three jolly ghosts!"

Jimmie shivered. "A cold and clammy shadder!" he murmured. "That's w'ot I feel like!"

"Want to haunt a graveyard, eh?" said his lordship.

"I'd rather pick out a house, and haunt *it*!" laughed the American. "Yes; I think I shall become a professional house-ghost. With a beautiful heroine in the background!"

The cockney turned viciously. "A 'ell of a joke!" he said. "Most as funny as Ally Sloper! Six 'undred shillings, coming, and no mortal 'and, to tyke it with! It's a gyme, I tell you! A bloomin' gyme on the part of the government! A 'ell of a 'ome-coming! 'You ayn't 'ere!' says 'e. 'You're sewed in the blanket, my man,' says 'e. After goin' through pyne and 'ell, for king and country! 'You're pushing up—'" He choked.

"Cheer up, old top!" His lordship flung an arm across the little "blighter's" shoulder. "Government's all right, and so's the king! So—"

"'Pack all your troubles,'" sang the American, and linking his arm in the cockney's, the three strolled on.

CHAPTER III

LEICESTER Square. The old grateful spot of green, like an oasis, in the rushing center of the throbbing town! London may change; its intricacies be wiped out; older memories, in stone and brick, disappear; historic landmarks, cease to be—but the beneficent little square ever remains, unchanging, as its founder intended. Snug and peaceful, its open gates extend a welcome for prince or pauper; artist or artisan; merchant or Bohemian; chorus lady or charwoman. The soldiers have sung of it when departing; they return to it, when they come back—at least, to its environs, where blithe temples of gaiety woo worn veterans from the dreary neighborhood of No Man's Land. Here within stone's throw of every man's palace—or palaces of gaiety—you may sit and meditate; con your fortune, review your past, or wonder at the future. How many wanderers, outcasts, scholars, returned soldiers, have sat here seeking to pierce their futures?

It seemed quite natural the next day, upon their return to London, for the three "pals" to seek the

little square, where, seated on a bench, they discussed the future, without coming to any conclusion. Then, for a long time they sat silent, a habit of preoccupation acquired in prison-camps. Around them children prattled and nursemaids gossiped, but they continued to rest there, passively, as if time, for them, meant nothing. His lordship was the first to bestir himself; just what his thoughts had been, he did not divulge, but that he had decided upon something, in his own mind, was apparent.

"I'm off, for a bit! See you chaps here later," he observed.

His lordship's manner and his words had the effect of arousing the others.

"I got an engyement, myself," said the little cockney, with a smirk. "I ayn't sying it ayn't a lydy. I ayn't sying"—more confidentially—"it ayn't a *beautiful* young lydy!"

"Guess *I'll* have to play the Lonely Soldier act," said the American, with a laugh.

"There's a wye," advised the cockney. "Put a line or two in the Agony columns of the newspaper, and get a Lonely Stab for a sweetheart. That is, if you 'aven't some one wyting—" proudly. "Some one whose 'eart is beating to 'url 'erself at you, with harms aching to 'ug you 'ard!"

"Haw, haw!" laughed his lordship, whose face had been momentarily somber. "I'd like to see *his* beautiful lydy!"

"Mybe you shall! Mybe I'll walk by with 'er on my harm, and—"

"We may gaze? A privilege! A blessed privilege!"

"You coves are jealous," said the cockney, with another smirk.

His lordship looked down. The American's eyes swung a bit aside. Both looked rather thoughtful.

"That's it," said the cockney swiftly. "Jealous! Mybe you've 'ad a lydy, but could not keep 'er?" Tapping his own chest. "I'm arsking you?"

"Tut! tut!" said his lordship. "You're keeping Sally of your 'Alley waiting."

"Alley, is it?" said the cockney. "Anyhow, I 'asn't lost 'er. And 'er name ayn't Mary—"

His lordship started.

"And I ayn't calling, and mumblin' about 'er, when I 'as the fever, in camp! And tellin' 'ow she'd up and left me—"

His lordship's hand tightened on the cheap stick. A flush sprang to his thin cheek, but soon receded. He swung his stick lightly. "Haw, haw!" he

laughed. "What bally nonsense a chap gets off, when he's off his blooming top! Must have made myself a nuisance, when you fellows helped to pull me through. What else did I talk about?"

"Nothing much," said the American, with a shrug. These tactless remarks of Jimmie annoyed him.

"Mary—Mary," said his lordship. "Nice name, and all that—but means nothing to me—nothing particular," he laughed.

"Of course," said the American.

"What rot! Haw, haw!"

They both laughed, but the little cockney only strutted. "W'ot eyes! 'And 'air like the wyving corn-tassels! And 'er lips— You know those red things that grow in France—"

"Poppies?" from his lordship absently.

"Little blighter," growled the American.

"You 'ates to 'ear me sing 'er praises, don't you?" jeered the cockney. "It mykes your mouth water, it do!"

"See you later!" said his lordship rather quickly.

"You 'asn't a bob, or two, to spare for a pal, 'as you?" said Jimmie.

His lordship dipped in his pocket. "That's the end," he said. "The last of the corporal's loan!"

"I'll spend it on the lydy," said the cockney, "and we'll drink your 'ealth!"

"Thank you," said his lordship, with a thin smile.

"Wishing you the syme 'appiness!" said the cockney, with another smirk, and walked off, holding his chest chestily. For a short time the other two sat silent. His lordship had announced his intention of going, but for the moment seemed to forget.

"What are you going to do?" said his lordship, suddenly getting up.

"Oh, I'll go over there, and watch the people at the Alhambra and maybe, since I'm only a ghost, they'll let me slip in."

"Only a ghost!" said his lordship, as if dwelling on some purpose he had in mind. "Haw, haw!" It was a bilious kind of a laugh.

"Thought of something funny?" said the other.

"Right-o!" His lordship indulged in the Americanism with apparent great gusto. "Wonderful city, eh?" he observed blithely, "though it does get jolly dark at night, these times!"

"The better for ghosts!" said the American.

"Haw, haw!" said his lordship once more, and strode off.

The American stretched himself idly. Then he, too, arose and walked toward one of the theaters.

His lordship went west—toward Belgravia—but the little cockney's destination lay in the opposite direction, for one was a ghost of high degree, and the other, of low! And though they might be pals to a certain degree, to the world there's a vast difference between Belgravia and White-chapel, which even modern socialistic tendencies but serve to make more pronounced.

Night had gradually descended and into an abyss of darkness the little cockney plunged quite confidently. Zigzag! Zigzag! Surely only an ardent lover could have found his way through those tortuous byways—the labyrinth of a somber and darkened London! As Jimmie went, he hummed—a gay melody fit for a gay Lothario. His discontent "ag'in' the government" for having disposed of his corporeal self, seemed to have momentarily left him. Under the influence of his tender mission all "grouch" had been laid aside. After traversing many dark lanes and alleys, at length the venturesome lover paused. He seemed to know

where he was, but how he knew, who might say, unless that London sixth sense, or instinct, had led him thither.

"Probably find 'er at one of the old 'ang-outs!" he muttered, and looked in such a place.

A woman, about sixty, gin-soaked, let out a yell at sight of him.

"If there ayn't my dash, dash Jimmie!" she whooped.

"'ello, Old Sweetheart," said Jimmie debonairly. "Thought I'd find you 'ere! And ayn't you looking natural? Soused just the syne, you old dear!"

"A-drownin' of my troubles, darlin'!"

"'as ye done it?" he asked, after a wobbly embrace.

"I 'asn't quite, but I is tryin' 'ard. It do tyke a powerful lot, though, with the government putting up the price of the widder's friend."

"A blarsted shyme!" muttered the other, thinking now of his own grievance against the government. "Drownin' sorrow 'ad ought to be myde cheap. That's what I 'olds!"

"And right you are, dearie! Puttin' a premium on sorrow, that's w'ot I calls it, w'en they puts up the price of a tot!"

"It's the bishops that's to blyme," said the other, patting her thin old shoulder. "Them that 'as their old port by the 'ogsheads, and preaching sermons ag'in' the 'orrid 'abits of the poor! I 'olds by General Booth who never was for denyng the poor working-man 'is bitter-beer."

"Or a lone widder, 'er little tot, dearie!"

"Right-o! But I sye, you're looking proper. And 'andsome—with the syme old smell!"

"And you 'look like a' hangel to me," she responded. "As if the 'eavens 'ad opened and the 'eavenly 'osts had just dropped you down from the dash, dash skies, dearie!"

"'ell! You're spouting poetry now. Does ye mean it, you bloomin' old darlin', or is it just the 'ot gin talkin'?"

"It's a mother's 'eart a-callin' out!"

"You jolly—" crude terms of endearment. "But you ayn't yet arsked w'ot *I'll* 'ave?"

"I 'opes nothing stronger than bitter-beer!" With maternal solicitude. "I never did like to see the young 'uns-tyke anythink stronger. It ayn't good for them, Jimmie. You know, I 'as always told you to 'old off from strong drink. You can't sye I 'asn't tried to bring you up right."

"That you 'as," he responded heartily. "You old blitherin', blinkin' old sweetheart, you!"

"Lord love you, but you were the sweetest byby," she said reminiscently. "And 'ow I loved you! (A little more gin, miss.)"

"I'll take a mite, too, miss!"

"Myke it bitter-beer, Jimmie!"

"I 'as a chill, Old Darlin'. You wouldn't 'ave me shakin' my bloomin' teeth out, would you now? And besides, I 'as a touch of the 'orrors. The whole town black as a Turko's fyce. It ayn't natural."

"'asn't 'e a convincing wye with him, miss?" she observed with maternal pride. "Such a wye of expressing 'imself!"

"I wasn't listening," said miss.

"You pay," said Jimmie, taking his glass. She laid down a coin. "Where'd you get it?"

"'ush, dearie!" She drew him into a corner, away from the others. "I got it on account of *you*, Jimmie. And a 'eap more!"

"Account of me?"

"Insurance money, darlin'! 'ush it is!" she whispered.

The other looked thoughtful. "'ow much?"

"Two 'undred pun."

"Whew!" whistled Jimmie. "'ow about it *now*? 'ere's a pretty kettle o' fish!"

"Mybe it ayn't so 'ard," she whispered.

"You mean, I'd better stay dead?" He spoke almost sternly.

"Would you be cuttin' off a lonely widder's mite, darlin'?" she whispered affectionately.

"Would I be cuttin' myself off from back pay?" answered Jimmie testily.

"'ow much, Jimmie?"

He figured.

"I could myke that up to you, darlin'," she murmured persuasively, "and still 'ave summat left over to drown trouble with, and not be a burden to you, dearie. I can tyke care of the king's shillings for you, every farthing of them."

"They ought to be puns instead of shillings when I thinks of w'ot I 'as been through," complained Jimmie. "When I thinks of the Huns' stews and the 'orses' 'oofs, and the other 'orrid messes I 'as tyken into my sufferin' system, I syes they ought to be *'undreds* of puns instead of shillings."

"Of course they ought, Jimmie," she said soothingly. "But"—more calculatingly—"you couldn't be expectin' to be paid for all you 'as endured and

suffered, Jimmie. And if I myke up the king's shilling to you, darlin', you will stay dead for my sake, dearie, won't you?"

He looked at her. "'ere's a bloomin' go," he said. "A parent beggin' 'er beloved hoffspring to stye a bleedin' corpse!"

"Only hofficially, Jimmie!" she murmured fondly.

He shook his head sadly. The gin was beginning to work. "Sacrificin' 'er hangel-son, for a tot of gin!"

"It ayn't that, Jimmie—" she pleaded.

"'as I come 'ome for this? 'as I? I arksk you?" He folded his arms.

"As long as you ayn't dead, Jimmie, you ayn't," she pleaded once more. "And a tot o' gin's a tot o' gin!" Logically. "And a prime comfort when your old bones are tottering, too! 'ere's a bit of siller, on account, Jimmie!"

He took it. "Sellin' my birthright," he murmured bitterly.

"Mybe, when the insurance money is spent, Jimmie, you could collect again from the government," she whispered persuasively.

"Eh?" said Jimmie, with a start. "Do" the government? Well, hadn't the government tried

to do him, when it had clipped the threads, unduly, of his gay young life? He stared at Old Sweet-heart with sudden admiration.

"You could get paid twice for bein' a 'ero, Jimmie," she breathed softly.

"It wouldn't be a bit too much," exclaimed Jimmie.

"That it wouldn't, darlin'!" Affectionately.

"When I think of those Hun stews—" he began.

"And 'ow they 'as ruined your digestion—"

"Gettin' paid twice ayn't once too often, is it now?" said Jimmie persuasively.

"It ayn't," she said.

"But 'ow'll it be when I wants to enlist again?" said Jimmie suddenly.

"'asn't you done your little bit, darlin'?"

"I 'as some scores to settle," said Jimmie.

"Leave them to the Lord, dearie," she murmured piously.

"I 'eard General Booth sye, the Lord needs 'is instruments. But I ayn't thinkin' of the Lord. I'm thinkin' of myself and a 'orrid lot o' grudges."

"Ayn't he the little fighting-cock?" she murmured proudly.

"Besides, I couldn't stye 'ere. The ole town

gives me the shivers, it do! 'ell of a lot of lonesomeness, I call it. All dark and foggy-like! I got to go back where it's nice and sociable—with whizzes and things 'appenin'."

"There's air-raids here, Jimmie," she suggested.

"Air-raids!" he said scornfully.

"Well, when you does find it too lonesome, darlin', you could tyke a new nyme, to enlist by. There's 'eaps o' nymes. You could call yourself 'iggins."

"'iggins!" Scornfully.

"I 'ad a young man onct who kept company with me, by name of 'iggins!"

"Is that any reason?" began Jimmie sternly.

"I was only suggestin'," she said. "Tyke a 'igh-sounding nyme, if you wants!"

"Lord Goosleberry," said Jimmie, still with scorn. "'ow would that do?"

"I leaves it to you. Suit yourself!"

Such large-mindedness! Jimmie gazed at her reproachfully.

"There are coves w'ot are proud of their nymes," he said.

"W'ot's in a nyme?" she quoted. "'ad I married 'iggins, your name would 'ave been 'iggins, wouldn't it?"

"There are coves," went on Jimmie, "who are proud to myke their names 'ousehold words!"

"Would you be deprivin' me of my comforts?" she whimpered. "Think 'ow I've loved you! Was I ever a-crossin' of you, darlin'? Didn't I allus let you run loose?"

He thought. Gutters and cellars! Certainly, a delirious, if dirty, freedom had always been his.

"Did I ever wollop you, darlin'?" she went on.

Jimmie thought "some more." Sure, the old girl had been good to him.

"Was I ever worryin' or curbin' of you, Jimmie? Was I botherin' w'ot happened, or lockin' you in, for fear you might get under the busses, or somethink? Didn't I give you a 'appy childhood, Jimmie, not caring w'ot you did, or 'ow you did it?"

Such arguments were irresistible. What heart could have resisted them? Certainly, not Jimmie's—softened now by the assuaging influence of Hollands.

"Right-o," he said, and struck a bargain. Also, he wrenched the old lady loose from another coin or two. "Another tot, miss!"

"I'll drink it for you, Jimmie," said the solicitous parent.

"No; you won't do that," said Jimmie. "But I'll tell you w'ot you *can* do."

"W'ot?"

"You can pay for it!"

"Did you find her?" said the American, somewhat later, as the little cockney returned to the rendezvous.

"Did I? Didn't I? I arsk you!" His tone implied volumes.

"As *beautiful* as you expected?"

"A 'undred times more!"

"How old did you say she was?"

"Sixteen—more or less."

"Chicken, eh?"

"That might apply," Jimmie smacked his lips. "A' figger of the Wenus of Milan! And glad to see me? W'ot you think?" he swelled. "Where's old Yellowskin?"

"His ludship hasn't returned yet."

"W'ot's his nibs up to, do you think?" asked Jimmie reflectively.

"I don't think," said the American.

"I 'ates a stiff upper-lip," said the little cockney. "Don't get much out of 'im, you don't! I

likes a pal w'ot opens his 'eart to you. Look at me! I ayn't 'idin' my love-affairs from no one. I ayn't ashamed of 'aving a beautiful young lydy in love with me. I arsk you now—'as I tried to 'ide it?"

"You're an open book!"

"Of course I am. And that's the wye a pal should be. Out and out, sye I! Nothin' 'idin'; always truthful!" Here Jimmie stretched himself on a bench. "Lor', ayn't it prime-sleepin' though! Arter the Hun 'ell-'oles I 'as slept in! And 'igh and dry, too! 'is yellowship is keepin' late 'ours."

"I suppose that's his own business."

"Well, all I got to sye is—You get up, and let 'im in, w'en 'e comes 'ome!" And the little cockney slept.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER leaving the cozy little square, his lordship hied himself uncertainly to his destination, being still, as the little cockney would say, rather "wobbly on his pins." Indeed, catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror of a Bond Street shop-window, he stopped to survey himself with a grim chuckle.

"Lord love us, look at it!" he said, cocking his head this way and that, at the pinched and yellow caricature of a man that bobbed and nodded humorously back at him from the mirror. "There's a sight to make a woman's heart go pit-a-pat!"

And yet there *had* been a time—

"Ho, ho! Every dog has his day!" He belonged to the past tense. Look at the thinned locks over the temple! Only the eyes hadn't changed very much—now hard as steel, then soft with humorous lights—a bit of Irish in them! Surely no one would know him—the wild young lord of other days! Prison-camp—the solitary—the hospital—had taken their toll. He trailed along—jerkily—with bent shoulders.

Finally, he reached the region of fine mansions. In front of one of the most imposing, he paused. It was now night, but in the gathering gloom, he could make out its massive proportions. He chuckled sardonically.

"I wonder," he thought, "do ghosts go in the front entrance, or the side? I suppose it behooves a ghost to be humble."

He rang at the side and a maid answered. "Arsking your pardon, miss, but might a returned Tommy be havin' a bite to eat?" said the intruder.

"*Are* you a returned Tommy?" she demanded pertly.

"Don't I look it?" he asked with an attempt at the old debonair air.

"You don't look like a soldier." Dubiously. "You seem too spineless!"

"It's the loving attention I received, miss, made me like that. High living, at the expense of the enemy, miss! When I think how high I 'ave lived, miss, it's a wonder I haven't died of apoplexy."

"Well, her ladyship wouldn't be turning a Tommy from the door, so you may come in," said the maid.

"Thankee, miss! I takes that kind of you."

And his lordship entered. The maid showed

him into a cozy-enough sitting-room, in the servants' quarters, and set a plain, but wholesome, repast before him—beef, bread and butter, and a half-pint of bitter-beer. His lordship surveyed this fare with a faint smile on his pinched countenance. His own house; his own bread and butter; his own beer, for that matter! He didn't remember the maid, and wondered if any of the old servants were left? The footman would probably have gone; and the gardener, the chauffeur and the stable man.

Odd, he should be eating his own bread like this! He seemed to have a rare appetite—an unusual one! Prime beef, this! It really tasted like beef. Think of that! And the butter—suggesting visions of sleek cattle and beautiful English meadows. His lordship half-closed his eyes. Ha, this was living! One could get fat on such fare. He breathed a wheezy sigh of bliss.

“Another cut of the beef, miss, if you ain't mind-ing! And another sip of the ale. I don't think I ever tasted such ale.”

“Help yourself,” she returned. “There's the knife.”

He did so. “Her ladyship feeds the help 'igh, I'm thinking,” he said.

“And why not?” tossing her head.

"Oh, I didn't mean no offense, miss. Missus 'ome, did you say?"

"I didn't say," she said. "But she is! Her has been to France—horspital-work—but her has got back."

"In the house now, then, I suppose?" His lordship's voice sounded a bit hoarse.

"Why are you arsking? You're not a burglar, I hopes?" Severely.

"Burglar? Me?" His lordship croaked merrily. "Lord love you, miss, do I look like one? A man who has the nerve to climb in winders, or up porches, not to mention a bit of muscle and a spine for the job?"

"You never can tell," she said. "And you has arsked a heap of questions."

"It's my sociable disposition, miss," he said, with a smile intended to be disarming. "After doin' his bit in the solitary, in Hun-land, it makes a cove sociable, when he gets back to blighty—especially when he sees a face like yours, miss!" with insidious flattery. "A face which, begging your pardon for bein' so bold, would make even a civilyon, sociable-like."

"Humph!" she said, tossing her head. "It's my opinion you're an artful one."

"Artful?" said his lordship. "They ain't hardly enough left of me, miss, to be artful. I hasn't the courage. I've lived that high, and been so pampered and fed-up, there isn't much more left of me than a shadow and a cough!"

"Have some more beef," said miss hastily. "And a sip more bitter-beer!"

"I take it kindly of you," he answered, "making a cove feel like he was—at home! It do look home-like here, miss! Snug and comfortable-like! No winds, no draughts, no rain, no mists, no cold that nips to the marrer; no rats—"

"What?" Indignantly.

"—Running over you, playful-like, when you try to sleep, and taking a nip or two, just to remind you to be sociable! Blighty!" He stretched his thin legs. "Mind if I 'as a fag?" She made no objection. "Got a match?" She produced one and he lighted the cigarette. "Makes it seem more like home than ever," he breathed luxuriously.

"Say," she observed, "you ain't a mite off, up here?" Touching her head.

"I should say I was very much on," he answered. "Though I might have had a bad spell, or two, back there, where I was fed high, and over-trained, with too much luxury!"

"If it's help you're needin', I'll speak to her ladyship, and you can come back to-morrer."

"Thank you kindly," he said, reaching for the beer.

"I has heard her ladyship's husband was at the front. Got killed!"

"Killed?" croaked his lordship.

"I ain't been here long, so I hasn't heard much of the family gossip yet," she confided. "But I'm hearing it, gradually, from him—the old butler what was with his lordship's family, before he, the bad 'un, the young lord, I mean, wedded her, the daughter of one of the proudest coal-kings of the kingdom. And one of the richest!"

"Married her for her money, I suppose?" said his lordship, burying his nose in the tankard.

"Not he! He had a-plenty. This was his house."

"Indeed?" murmured the guest.

"His town-house! And he had estates in the country. And there you has it—they both had too much. He was high-steppin', and her proud and haughty. But laws! how I'm runnin' on, and with a mere stranger!"

"Is a returned Tommy, a stranger?" said the guest of the kitchen reproachfully. "I ask you,

miss? And well I know the likes of I has no right to be paying compliments to the likes of you—this being old England and not sunny France, where the young ladies has ever a friendly word and bit of gossip—and where they ain't afraid of making a poor Tommy feel at home." Here his lordship, feeling he was getting involved, took a deep sip of bitter-beer.

"I has heard," she said with another toss, "the Tommies has most of them give up their sweet-hearts at home, for them French girls."

"Far be it from me, to be affirming of that," said his lordship. "On the contrary! There may be a bit of dalliance away from home, miss—and who would be a-blamin' of them?—but their 'earts are true to Poll. You know the old song, miss?—'No matter what you do, if your 'eart be true'?"

"I hasn't no good opinion of such sentiments," she returned. "Immoral, I call them! Men ain't any too good, anyhow. Look at his lordship that was! A wild clip—with his wine and his women—chorus young ladies, and all that!"

"Maybe he wasn't happy at 'ome," said his lordship.

"With her? As beautiful as—" Indignantly.

"Beautiful!" muttered the guest.


"One of the most beautiful women in England, I have heard. But that's men! Ill-treatin' of even the most beautiful women—"

"But maybe it was only his high spirits? Maybe there wasn't much real harm in him."

"No real harm? That's all there is in most of them. Men, I mean!"

"My, hasn't our cat got sharp claws!" said his lordship weakly.

"And speaking of high spirits, maybe her has high spirits, too!" His lordship looked depressed. "I had it from the housekeeper, how his lordship ust to come home nights, and the condition he was in!"

"No doubt," murmured the guest. "You seem to have learned quite a bit, miss, for the brief while you have been here." 

"It's my sympathetic heart! I hates men like that, and when I look at her ladyship, so beautiful—and think how he drove her to—"

"Divorce? Maybe he wasn't so bad though as he was painted," said his lordship weakly.

"Worse, in my humble opinion," said miss. "But laws! how I'm runnin' on! I always had a tongue."

"Too bad if you hadn't," said his lordship,

growing bolder. "With that pleasant-sounding voice of yours! But I must be off, miss. If feeding high and living on the fat of the land hadn't turned me into a scarecrow, I'd be telling you a compliment or two. But you wouldn't take kindly to a compliment from me?"

"You don't look like a man to be paying compliments to no one," she said. "It's more how you looks yourself, you should be thinking of. A bit of term in the horspital might do you good—you're that shaky—"

"How I look myself," laughed his lordship. Then he gave a cough. "A shadow! A cold clammy shadow!"

"It is a bit off here, you are," she said not without sympathy, again touching her pert head. "It's rest you need, my man."

"Rest?" he croaked. "The grave? Haw! haw!"

"What a horrid laugh!" said the kitchen young lady.

"Hark, from the tombs, a doleful sound," he quoted.

"I say, you do give one the creeps. And you has such a' unnatural glitter in your eyes—"

"Comes from high livin', miss," he said

hoarsely. "Six courses for breakfast, miss! All of 'em straw-soup! Eleven for dinner—a little bit of the same! Have you ever tasted it? Delicious, say I!" His lordship rubbed his hands. "Though it do give you that gouty feeling, at times!"

She gazed at him, half in fear, half in wonder. He cocked his head at her, like a weird bird—a bird partly plucked.

"If you wish, I'll speak to her ladyship," she said, "and she could get you a place in the horspital. She's that kind, for all her proud bearing, and hundreds of soldiers she has helped, and is helpin'—"

"Not for worlds," he said quickly. "I mean, your solicitude betrays a kind, but needless, apprehension for me—"

"Laws! what long words!"

"But"—with a wave of his hand—"nature, kindly nature, shall be my doctor. And I shall set my couch in a little ward, amid her vastness."

"It's an actor, not a burglar, I'm thinkin' you!"

"My gentle nurse shall be the soft touch of the wooing breeze—"

"This time o' the year? It's more the cold fog and the nippin' gusts you'll get—"

He waved aside the interruption, and moved

to the door. "Thanking you very kindly, miss, and wishing you the best o' luck," he said, as he went out.

The little maid looked after him. "War do play strange freaks with people," she said to herself.

His yellowship walked on and disappeared without a backward look.

She cleared away the things. "I wonder if he was ever handsome?" she thought. "Anyhow, his eyes weren't half bad. More fun than harm in *them*, I should say! But him being a man, you never can tell."

CHAPTER V

HIS lordship walked a block or so from the splendid mansion, when his fingers touched a key in one of his pockets. Had the action been purely subconscious? He stopped and looked at it. "Think of that!" he muttered. Just how he had happened to retain, or had been permitted to retain, the key all these days, was a mystery to himself. He had hardly been aware he had it. The key was small—fitted a Yale lock—and presumably, it was so insignificant, it had been overlooked.

An impulse to retrace his footsteps to the splendid mansion moved his lordship. He acted upon it. Nay, more—

He mounted the front steps and tried the key. It fitted. Of course, it would, and softly his lordship entered—as he had entered softly before. But now he entered soberly. The hush of the great hall seemed overwhelming and involuntarily he caught his breath. The lights were dim as in a cathedral. His lordship sank into a chair; it seemed the logical thing to do; he had sunk into the chair before—often! Logically, he should start to take off

his boots. A queer chuckle escaped his lips and it startled him. It seemed to shock that still religious atmosphere. The sound—and himself—seemed most out of place here.

Suddenly he started. A motor-car had stopped in front of the door—the engine stopped. Was some one getting out? Yes, he heard a door slam—then, some one coming up the front steps. His lordship stepped quickly back, behind a piece of massive hall furniture, where he waited. He heard a bell ring. Joggins—good old Joggins—a bit grayer—responded.

“I’ll tell her ladyship—” It was Joggins speaking to some one at the door.

“No need! I am ready.” A musical voice!

A lovely form came down the stairs. A man’s voice jarred dissonantly. Again the closing of a door—then silence! Only a moment later, the faint sound of the discreet Joggins’ retreating footsteps! His lordship once more looked around him—then toward the door through which she had passed.

“Haw, haw!” he chuckled. “A man is but a breath! To-day, he blows; to-morrow, he’s forgotten.”

He had a vague idea this was a poetical quotation but was not sure, and once more sank in the

accustomed chair. "Lord love us, we never know anything, until we become ghosts!" It was as if he was just beginning to go to school and acquire wisdom! There was a queer buzzing in his head as he re-visualized in his mind's eye that brief glimpse of her. 'At the same time, he was vaguely aware of a faint indefinable perfume in the air. He wasn't accustomed to such subtle odors, having for some time past lived, breathed and had his being amid less Elysian smells! An intruder in that sanctuary, eh? The man and woman had seemed to understand each other very well, he repeated to himself. Very well, indeed, in fact! About as well as if they were going to be—or perhaps, they already had—maybe, they were—? There had been time. It seemed years since he (the ghost) had left!

Wouldn't that be funny, though? 'About as funny—as the little cockney would say—as a graveyard cross, with its arms knocked off.

Lady Mary and the man had moved off together in such a matter-of-fact manner, they might already belong to each other—quite conceivable that was—maybe, probable! Did he blame her? Not a bit. Ghosts don't blame. Such emotions were not for them! His lordship sat perched on

the edge of the big chair like a frail figure that "didn't belong."

Then he got up mechanically and went up the stairs. His footsteps sank in deep rugs; he made no noise. First, he peered in Lady Mary's apartments, and he got quite a start. A tiny voice began to yell.

"Hell!" said his lordship, and retreated quickly—just in time! Some one—nurse, no doubt—came quickly in and his lordship wiped his brow and moved away. By this time he was quite bewildered. One doesn't go away a long time and come back for nothing!

"A bally Enoch Arden—that's what I am," he told himself.

Even yet he wasn't quite sure how matters stood or just what he should do. What was it old Enoch did? Stayed dead? Wise old boy! Maybe Lady Mary hadn't had to get that divorce, after all, for that "officially dead stuff" would have made her a widow; saved her a lot of trouble and, perhaps, some scandal! Yes; he was obliged to the makers of the official lists. Clever "guys" those, as his American pal had sarcastically said, when he had learned he, too, had been, officially, shuffled off this mortal coil!

A sudden after-thought intruded in his lordship's brain. He told himself he'd like to have just a look at that "hollering" little cuss! Some lungs! His lordship himself coughed feebly.

"What's that?" The nurse came to the door and his lordship stood quickly out of sight. "I thought I heard a sound!"

"Maybe it was me, miss," Joggins, who had come up, observed.

"Maybe it was!" But she gazed furtively about. "Did you cough?"

"I didn't!"

"I heard some one—"

"I might have done it, unconscious-like," conceded Joggins. "How is the little dear?"

"Tyke, I call him! Hear him! What a row!"

"It's a fine voice he has, miss," said Joggins admiringly.

"Fine?" Contemptuously. "Ferocious, I calls it!"

"A healthy voice's a good sign, miss!"

"A sign of temper! Thought I had him nice and sleepin', when he breaks out like this, as if something had frightened him."

"What could be frightening him?" asked Joggins quickly.

"I don't know. Only it's a gloomy old house, and I don't care if I says it."

"It's a very fine house," said old Joggins loyally. "A fine old English house! They don't build houses like it, nowadays. This was built when lords were lords, and gentlemen, gentlemen."

"That may be so. Give me a smaller house and cozier rooms, and bright ceilings and bright lights. Sometimes, when I sits alone with *it*—while her ladyship is at the hospital, or the opera, or the theater—it seems like the whole place is full of shadows, and ancestors walking around—"

"Hoity-toity!" said old Joggins. "It's the newer generation you belong to! You haven't been trained in the old, where big houses, and high ceilings are a sign of high breeding. And as for shadows and ancestors walking around—that's all in your eye!"

"Maybe it is, and maybe it ain't! Anyhow, I'm sick of this little hollerer."

"If he makes such a noise now, miss, think what a noise he'll make in the world, when he grows up!" said the devoted Joggins.

By this time his lordship had slipped downstairs. His head was whirling as, absently, he let himself out the front door, and walked swiftly away.

"Did you hear that?" said the nurse, wheeling on Joggins.

"What?" half startled.

"Some one slammed the front door!"

"I didn't hear it."

"Because you're too old! I'm sure I heard it, and I don't like it."

"What do you think it was?"

"How do I know? Only, I don't like old houses that ain't full of people."

"You ain't thinkin' of ghosts?" said Joggins curiously.

She shrugged. "Maybe people come back, and maybe they don't," she said enigmatically.

"You're talking a lot of nonsense," said Joggins.

"Am I? I'll tell you what—you join our little table-rappin' circle, and maybe you won't be so sure."

"Of what?"

"That there *ain't* spirits!"

CHAPTER VI

HIS lordship did not relate his weird experience to the other two, nor did they ask any questions, having their own personal concerns to think of. The practical problems of life, about this time, were simple, but intense, especially those relating to the commissary department. Their lodgings were provided; they need not bother about "bed"; but about "board," it was different. For "bed," nature's hostelry offered ample and varied accommodation. If they tired of one place, there was another—the delectable green, for example, alongside of which, by day, bustles Piccadilly's swift traffic, and near which, overlooking it benignly—arises the stately palace of royalty. Here the bobbies were wont to suffer wandering vagrants (like themselves) to rest in peace, with no more ungentle company than the sheep, fat and succulent-looking creatures that were a constant aggravation to pinched appetites, suggesting visions of chops, steaks and roasts. Such bisected parts rolled up to you on a platter, or deliciously grilled, were the subject of discussion between Jimmie and the American, early the next

morning. They broached the topic even before his lordship awoke.

"The 'ell of it is," said the little cockney wisely, "the government mykes a bleedin' ghost of you, but it doesn't tyke away your bloomin' stummick!"

"Thin air and a shiver, for breakfast!" laughed the American. "Sumptuous enough fare, for a ghost!"

"I'd rather be 'avin' a bloater, or a kipper, and a bit of sole, with a prime cut of bacon," muttered the little cockney.

His lordship here came to life jerkily. "Haw," he said. "I was dreaming—a little cuss, hollering and yelling—some lung—"

"How's your appetite?" said the American. "I could eat—"

"That's the 'ell of it"—began the little cockney once more. "The government mykes a ghost of you, and—"

"Cut it!" said the American. "The question is, how are we going to live? If only one of us could come to life, and collect back pay?"

"Which one?" said the cockney quickly.

"Well, *you*, for example!"

"Not me," said Jimmie, shaking his head. "I styes dead."

"Why?" looking at him curiously.

"I 'as my reasons," he said evasively.

"Since seeing the beautiful young lady?"

"Never mind! A gentleman shouldn't be prying or inquiring too closely into another gentleman's private affairs." Jimmie's tone was rather "nasty"; he said nothing about the piece of silver in his pocket—given him by Old Sweetheart!

"How could you marry her, if you stay dead?" persisted the American in a chaffing tone.

"That ayn't any of your business. Mybe it ayn't a marrying kind of a love-affair."

The American shrugged. "How about you," he said to his lordship, "coming to life?"

"My mind is a bit nebulous on the subject," said his yellowship, shaking slightly in the cold air. "I have no pronounced personal antipathy to resuming where I left off, in *propria persona*, but there are extraneous considerations."

A shadow of a smile flitted over the American's face. "What others may think, or desire," he murmured.

His lordship did not seem to hear. "Expediency," he murmured. "What is best! One sometimes wonders?"

The American nodded. Sometimes one breaks

off with the past; sometimes one has reasons. Criminals—black sheep—prodigals—for example—poeple who have flung themselves into the cauldron of forgetfulness—who deem themselves as well, or better, forgotten—

“I can’t, at the moment, reconcile myself to the resumption,” began his lordship.

The American eyed him, absently. If his lordship preferred or had reasons for wanting to remain in the realm of ghosts—that was his lordship’s business. The latter rubbed his thin hands together.

“Maybe I’d better go on a bit as it is,” he murmured. “There’s—there’s”—the mist had got in his throat—“something rather piquant in going on as we are! Besides, fate seemed to have arranged it and one is but a feather in a tempest, in these matters, after all.”

“W’ot the bloomin’ —— are you talking about?” said the cockney. “If it’s feather-weights, I ayn’t feelin’ like no fighting-cock.”

“So that eliminates you and him from the category of ‘live ones,’” ruminated the American.

“How about yourself?” observed quickly his lordship.

“Let sleeping dogs lie,” said the other, with a

smile. "I think I'll make your government a present of my back pay," nonchalantly.

His lordship coughed sympathetically. "Still, setting that bally ghost business aside, we really have to live, you know, until—"

"We're ready, or they're ready, to take us back. I suppose we can get back?"

"Sure! We'll be fit as fiddles after a bit, and then—any name is good enough—"

"For cannon-food, eh?" laughed the American. "But to build ourselves up, we must have the where-withal—hearty food and all that!" The cockney felt the coins in his pocket. They seemed to burn as indecision swayed him. Should he speak of them?

"Let me think," said his lordship, "if I may not find a way? I know where there is money. The question is—how to get it?"

"I 'opes you are not thinking of becomin' a burglar," said Jimmie virtuously.

His lordship started. He touched his forehead, his eyes sparkling.

"I might," he ruminated.

"I draws the line!" said the little cockney. "I who 'as sat in the 'earing of General Booth! I 'as my ideas of 'onesty, I 'as."

"How would it be if I became an *honest* burglar?" said his lordship.

"There ayn't no such thing," said the cockney piously. "There ayn't no compromising with the devil. 'asn't I 'eard General Booth sye—?"

"Needs must when the devil drives!" laughed his lordship. "But one can't burglarize at this time of day. Meanwhile, one is very hungry."

Good and evil struggled in Jimmie's bosom, the while he fingered the coins in his pocket wistfully. 'A' bounteous breakfast and dinner for one, with plenty to drink thrown in, or far less sumptuous repast for three?—That was the question. There was something very appealing about that thought of unstinted abundance for one—a good proper gorge, until you "could 'ardly move"—with tankards galore!—tripe and onions!—plenty of it!—winkles!—a great heap of "greens"!

His lordship took up a notch in his belt at that moment. Whereupon good conquered in the little cockney's breast.

"I 'ave a small coin, or two," he confessed. "Come on, you coves, and let's 'ave a bite."

"A coin or two," said his lordship. "Where'd you get 'em?"

Jimmie replied spiritedly that his lordship could go somewhere, and find out!

"His lordship means, were they properly come by?" said the American. "Otherwise, he would have scruples in partaking, and so, perhaps, might I!"

"Oh, you would?" sneered the cockney. "Properly come by! And 'im"—pointing—"about to embark upon the career of a burglar!"

"*Honest* burglar!" corrected his lordship.

"I 'asn't been brought up to tell w'en a burglar's 'onest, and w'en he ayn't! Only—" here he breathed hopefully. Having done his duty he had done all that might be expected of him. Blissful pictures of that solitary "gorge" once more assailed him. "You coves don't 'ave to come. I'm arskin', but I ayn't urgin'. If, in your 'earts, you think there's 'arm, and you 'as your doubts, it wouldn't 'urt my 'feelin's, if you hup and said so!" Artfully. "I likes a man"—more hopefully still—"who 'as the courage of w'ot 'is 'eart is telling 'im—"

"I don't suppose," said his lordship, "under the circumstances—the new career I'm contemplating, I should be too particular! A burglar shouldn't be too particular."

"And if he were, a ghost wouldn't be," said the American.

"True!" And as the two linked arms with the disappointed one, and walked on, the touching words of the barracks ditty fell appealingly from him lordship's lips:

"Jam—jam—jam for dinner to-day—"

But to this blithe effort Jimmie did not respond with customary enthusiasm.

"Shut up," he half-snarled. "I 'ates that song!"

Does one always regret a good action? The little cockney still continued to figure, mentally, *what* a single "gorge" he might have had! What a single "gorge" he had been *robbed* of!

"Jam—jam—"

"D— jam!" he muttered. And they say virtue is its own reward?

Night had fallen when his lordship, with burglarious intent, paused once more before the spacious mansion. Waiting until the street appeared deserted, he noiselessly admitted himself—via the front door. He had waited until her ladyship had departed—in a motor, as before and with the man! With all her war-duties, her ladyship evidently believed in sustaining home-amusements; but in this, the pub-

lic was with her. Business as usual! It was the slogan. And as for pleasure—the nation mustn't get down-hearted. Besides, don't actors and singers have to live? Shouldn't their business go on? So darkened London went on having certain of its amusements, and people like her ladyship went on patronizing them. And men, back from the front, blessed and enjoyed them. If one can smile between times, is it not well?

His lordship got a fairish view of the man, with her ladyship, as the two whirled away. Big handsome duffer! His lordship knew him well. He made his lordship feel, for the moment, his own comparative insignificance! Indeed, for several minutes, he forgot his burglarious mission and stood in the shadows, like a mournful spirit. Then he pulled himself up abruptly, while a sardonic chuckle fell from his lips. How unimportant is the individual atom? What a vanity-annihilator this ghost business was! Of course, he hadn't really expected his memory would be kept green, but it was a bit disconcerting to see her whisked off in this fashion, by another—and that other a well-hated rival of the past! Still if people *would* “come back,” as his lordship had done, they had to expect little things like this.

And had not the lady and his lordship violently quarreled and separated? That he loved her still made the situation more mocking. That glimpse of her had cut like a knife. A moment his lordship half-closed his eyes. How often had he thought of her during the dreary months of exile—months when he was supposed to have been dead? Subtle memories assailed him. Then he shrugged. Oh, fool! A ghost should be merely capable of impersonal observation.

For a few moments his lordship wandered noiselessly through the big rooms, fraught with memories. The dim light should have been soothing, as he felt very tired; and one could lie down on the thick rugs and find rest, his weary brain suggested, but he resisted the temptation. There was a faint odor of tobacco-smoke in the drawing-room. His successor smoked excellent cigars. His lordship lighted a fag—quite good enough for him!—and telling himself he should have a very “homey-feeling” sank into a reverie. Once or twice that faint weird chuckle fell again from his lips, as if he realized it was funny to sit there, and yet not “belong”; to know that he was about as detached and remote from his environment as a straw man might have been.

As he smoked he thought—the “mad young lord!”—some one had called him.

He put down the fag and permitted it to smolder on the ash-tray; then with another low, weird chuckle, he found himself drifting up-stairs, only to come to a sudden stop. The nurse was in the room with the “little hollerer,” whom she was at that moment addressing. His lordship paused to listen.

“Now, you little tyke,” nursie was saying, “I’m going to leave you. Do you hear? And you can yell your head off! And you can’t tell *her* I didn’t stay with you, can you? She can stay with you, herself. I’ve had enough of you. Good night!” Mockingly.

Whereupon nursemaid departed, no doubt to meet the policeman below—or the gas-man, or the coal-man.

“Poor little Some Lung!” ruminated his lordship, and once more paused to listen, not without apprehension. But Some Lung did not yell his head off, just then. Perhaps he had already had his yells, and there was a limit to his prowess. At any rate, he was still—as still as the grave!

“Maybe he gets lonesome,” thought his lordship

sedulously. "Such a little chap, for such a big room! Maybe he feels lost. Perhaps it doesn't seem like blighty to him. Perhaps, he'd like a smaller place to holler in!" Thinking which, his lordship peeped in!

Some Lung slept peacefully, his respiration about as gentle as a butterfly moving its wings. For a moment his lordship looked down. He thought he detected the likeness of the big man—his successor—in Some Lung. He made a few investigations. There was a man's wardrobe in his closet—shaving materials in his bathroom. His lordship felt his own chin, absently; *he* needed a shave. Should ghosts grow beards?

An adjoining room was fitted as a private office and reading-room and his lordship went to the bookcase, but not to take a book. His fingers touched a panel and the door of a safe was revealed. He did not require any "soup" to blow the door open for he knew the combination and his fingers worked swiftly. Soon he had the door ajar and there was displayed before his eyes, pigeonholes full of ten- and twenty-pound notes—just as of yore!—and many valuables. His lordship contemplated the contents for a moment, and then once more made that queer chuckling sound. Of course, all this

was his; robbing himself—that's what it was! The "honest burglar." As he stuffed his inner pockets with the notes, he found himself mildly amused—as much amused as a ghost could be! A valuable pearl pin and other articles of jewelry that had been his personal property, he helped himself to, but a magnificent brooch—his present to her!—he left where it was—the while wondering if she ever wore it any more.

Probably not as she had jewelry enough of her own; also, a big estate of her own, as well as his which, no doubt, had been probated long before now! He could, without compunction, indulge in a little nibble like this of to-night, from the thousands he had left behind, and which, really, still were his. Again, the realization of his—her anomalous situation swept over him. She, married to another, while he was still—well, not really "sewed in a blanket," don't you know! Deuced awkward!—especially for her—he was almost sorry for her—or was she really married to some one else?—it must be so!—the man's clothes in the closet—the shaving paraphernalia—the likeness of Some Lung to the big duffer in the motor-car? All seemed to point undisputedly to one fact. Still he would make certain—later!

His lordship now rubbed his chin, reflectively. Ghosts don't have regrets, he was thinking; ghosts only glide away. "Best for you, and best for me," as the old song said! The bank-notes rustled cheerlessly in his breast pockets and he felt little zest in his burglarious mission. A distant yell awakened his lordship from this rather protracted and melancholy reverie.

"Hello, old Some Lung has come to life!" he murmured, and waited expectantly; but nurse did not respond. Nurse evidently did not believe in coddling methods. "Let 'em yell their heads off!" was her convenient formula for peevish infants, when mistress was not around, though no doubt she said "Sweetums!" and "Little sugar-plum!" when mistress was present and looking on.

"I believe he's lonesome," thought his lordship sympathetically. He could understand that feeling. Didn't he know it well? Don't all ghosts? An irresistible impulse moved him and he stole back to Some Lung. The little chap seemed surprised to see him. Who are you, and where did you come from, said his wondering eyes.

"It's quite all right," said his lordship reassuringly. Was it? Some Lung had his doubt and opened his mouth to yell.

"Go it!" said his lordship: "Right over the top! Give 'em—"

Some Lung didn't yell. Perhaps he only wanted to yell when people didn't want him to.

"Aw, come on!" said his lordship encouragingly. "Over you go! 'At 'em! Holler; call 'em names! Now—"

Some Lung looked sulky. I won't go over the top, he seemed to say.

"Wants his little tot of rum!" chortled his lordship merrily.

Some Lung looked disgusted; also bored! Supreme infantile ennui was in his big eyes.

"All right," said his lordship. "Have your own way! Back to the dug-out it is. Nice and cozy-like—that's what you want."

Some Lung cooed just then, and his lordship looked delighted. "The dash, dash little cuss, if he ain't trying to sing!" he said.

Some Lung said: "Goo, goo!"

"Right-o," said his lordship, as if understanding fully. "How'll a little lullaby go?"

"Goo!" said Some Lung affirmatively.

"I'll give you one about the 'Cooties,'" said his lordship. "It's the sweetest little cradle-song! And it begins something like—

O, the cooties—the cute,
Cunning cooties!
Damn the little cooties!

Isn't that a cute little song?"

Some Lung chortled, delighted, while his lordship croaked a few more choice and delectable bits. Indeed they were getting on now first rate together. Some Lung seemed quite to understand these delicate and refined selections, or, perhaps, he liked his lordship's voice which came in hoarse whispers, like the rattling of corn-shucks, in a frosty gust of night-wind. His lordship told Some Lung all about the habits of the cooties, in interminable verse, and Some Lung appeared eagerly to absorb this more or less metrical and musical lesson in natural history. Then his lordship softly croaked a few other soothing cradle-songs replete with references to whizz-bangs, and Some Lung took to the whizz-bangs as readily as if they had been babies' rattles. Soothed by these sweet imaginary sounds, his little soul soon was wafted imperceptibly to slumber-land.

His lordship continued to sit there quietly, his finger for a time in the grip of Some Lung. Then slowly that grip relaxed. At that moment, there was a footstep in the hall and old Joggins, solici-

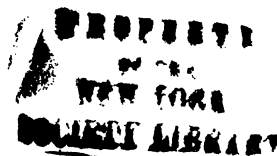
tous about Some Lung, came cautiously into the room. His lordship was taken unaware.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Joggins, seeing that figure sitting there.

His lordship had to do something. He did; he got up. At the same time, he fixed his eyes upon Joggins. No doubt his stare was queer and glassy enough!

"His eyes!" stammered Joggins. Nursie was right. Ghosts do come back!

His lordship's glare now had an awful intensity and Joggins felt his knees knocking together. His lordship started to walk toward Joggins with a peculiar glidey motion. This was too much for Joggins. He collapsed; and at that, his lordship paused. Poor old Joggins!—a moment his lordship, with an expression of concern, bent over him; then Joggins moved. The shock had not been too much for him; he had only fainted. Reassured, his lordship straightened, glided by, descended and let himself noiselessly out of the house.



CHAPTER VII

THEY lived now like lords, and one of them at least—the little cockney—began to take on flesh. Between “gorges,” he visited the beautiful young lady of whose praise he never tired to sing, strutting like a Turk and brazenly scoffing at hymeneal suggestions. As if he needed a clergyman who only put a damper on true love! As he spoke, he leered wickedly, and shoved out his chest. “The only clergyman ’er and me wants,” he said, “is the little fat cove with the little bow and arrers! I ’ates clergymen, all in black! They looks like crows.” Which reprehensible sentiments they suffered to pass unheeded!

But in spite of high living, his lordship did not pick up, or come back, physically, as he should have done. On the contrary, he fell into an apathy; if he went to a music-hall, he forgot quite where he was, and gazed, with lack-luster and unappreciative eyes, upon the hard-working comedian, and even failed to laugh at the jokes. Once he went to the park, but her ladyship chanced to pass in a car, the other

man at her side, and he went there no more. He acquired the reprehensible habit of passing a good deal of time at the embankment, excusing himself on the ground that he liked to look at the water and watch the boats. But the simple fact was that he was lonesome, frightfully lonesome! For him the days went by on leaden wings and he pined, and grew even thinner, if that was possible. When he ate, he only dallied with his food to Jimmie's indignation; chops and choice cuts of lamb interested him but little, and rare roasts were but an indifferent blessing. Something was wrong; what was the matter? What did he want? They wondered, but his lordship began to realize what it was he did want.

"Maybe if I see the little hollerer again?" he told himself, and imperceptibly brightened, for the moment.

"You ought to take a trip to the seashore," said the American who, for several days, had been studying and observing these ominous signs of waning health and spirits in his yellowship. "Try Brighton!"

But his lordship shook his head.

"Maybe it's 'is conscience that's 'urting him," said the little cockney. "'im, with 'is pockets

bulgin' with ten-pun notes and jewels!" Significantly.

"Didn't I tell you they were honestly come by?" said his lordship, with a sickly smile.

"I 'eard you sye it," said the little cockney. "If you 'adn't, do you think I'd 'ave 'elped you a-spend-ing of it? There are times when you sye, trust a pal and arsk no questions. Though I 'asn't seen the lamp yet!"

"The lamp?"

"W'ot you rubs! A bloomin' Aladdin 'e is! Goes out and comes back with the crown-jewels in 'is pockets. 'ow about givin' me a palace, with four 'undred beautiful hareem-lydies?"

His lordship yawned, then absently took himself off. "Poor chap," said the American. "What ails him?"

"Mybe 'e 'as a broken 'eart," said the little cockney jocosely. "A lot may 'appen when a man's away so long!"

The American nodded. "Things that make a man want to stay in the land of the missing!"

"'e talked a lot about 'is missus, when 'e was dotty," said the cockney. "No end of a swell she is! It's my opinion 'e 'as been to the 'ouse; secretly, of course! 'e's that chaynged 'is own mother

would 'ardly know 'im. Anyhow, w'ot 'e's found out, 'angin' around, 'asn't 'eartened him. Mybe 'er's married again, thinking 'im dead! 'er might even 'ave a kid, by the other one. Mybe 'e thinks 'e'd be a 'ero, if 'e did stay w'ot she thinks 'im—a bleedin' ghost!"

Again the American nodded. "He'll soon be that if he keeps on," he said. "Looks to me as if he's just clinging to life like a leaf! Needs a bit of good news, to help him hang on! Take it from me, I think he will let go, if he doesn't have it. I've seen lots of chaps go, just like that."

"Back there, in the 'ell-'ole," said the cockney.

"They just got discouraged, or nature did. Then snap—very gentle—napoo—fini—off they went!"

"'ow can we 'elp?" said the little cockney helplessly.

"That's just the point," said the American thoughtfully. "I'm afraid we can't; he wouldn't have it—even though he may be making a bally ass of himself—through mistaken chivalry, perhaps!"

"Why don't 'e do the wye I does?" said the little cockney. "Always keep a weather-eye out for a' hextra sweetheart, or two!"

The other did not answer, at once. "I have an

idea," he said, at length. "See you later!" And got up. He made his way to a Strand Hotel, where he asked for, and searched, an old well-thumbed directory. A name had frequently dropped from his lordship's lips "back there," when suffering from shell-shock and delirium.

Half an hour or so later, the American stood before the spacious mansion. "This," he told himself, "should be the house." For a few moments, he gazed with interest upon the fine old residential landmark. Then he asked himself now that he was here, what should he do? It is very difficult to insinuate yourself in others' affairs. Could he go to the beautiful mistress of the mansion, presuming she lived there, and say: "Your husband that is, or was, is not dead, but he is very ill—pining away. Do you care?"

That didn't seem a very graceful or tactful way to proceed, especially if she were married again! And if she wasn't married again, she might be greatly embarrassed, and thank him not at all for bringing up the name of one from whom she was, or had intended to be, separated by due process of law. If she wasn't divorced, but thought herself a widow, she might not thank any one for bringing her unwelcome news of one she had wished, or

thought she wished to forget. And if she hadn't yet married, she might be contemplating the same; she might be engaged. And how, in that event, would she regard a messenger, from the shadow-land, as it were?

Indeed, the problem presented many difficulties. A disinterested but sincere friend might well hesitate before embarking upon its solution. But the American would go a long way for his yellowship. It wasn't for nothing they had shivered and nearly died together, in the cold marshes, and suffered a thousand vicissitudes, while making their way out. One couldn't forget certain eloquent little things, indubitably associated with those vicissitudes—how his lordship would laugh or croak, but never complain—or shirk the disagreeable!—and smile in the face of pain.

At first, the American had thought of going to a detective agency for further enlightenment, but he shrank from this, knowing his lordship would not thank him. Then he had thought of searching for, and going to, the family solicitor, for there would be one, of course. But what could he say to the solicitor? The same difficulties that confronted him, in the event of seeking an interview with the mistress of the place, were here, likewise, in

evidence. He could not say he had sought the imposing legal light, as a matter of idle curiosity; nor could he betray his lordship by revealing the truth about him.

He could not proceed to any such extreme—and yet, as he had told the little cockney, his lordship instead of getting well, seemed rather receding in health—and he hadn't very far to go, before he would let go, altogether! There were a lot of things the matter with him—there would be, after one has suffered shell-shock—but most important was the fact that his lordship had not seemed to *care* whether he shuffled off this mortal coil or not. If only he could be made to care.

Irresolutely, the American approached the servants' entrance of the big house. He had read that was the way detectives always proceeded, gathering their information, about the great folk above, from the other folk below. The caller endeavored to disguise the sheepishness he experienced and he strove to stiffen his resolution by the justice of his cause. The same maid that had admitted his lordship, now confronted the newcomer.

"How do you do, miss?" he said, endeavoring to assume the manner of a detective under similar circumstances. "A returned Tommy, miss!" he

explained. "And the government's a bit slow about back pay, and so—"

"Come in," she said. But her manner was not exactly cordial. "Sit down!"

He did. She regarded him a moment with suspicious eyes; then set before him fare, about the same as his lordship had partaken of there. The guest was not hungry, but he pretended to eat, and incidentally, he felt like a fool. Also, he believed he was not a great success in his new rôle, as he felt he did not seem to inspire confidence. To cover his own self-consciousness with a mask of assurance, he began to talk, but the maid only listened ominously.

"There was another Tommy here," she said at length, with a slight tightening of her lips.

"Was there now?"

"He sat right there where you are."

"Indeed?" Her voice had seemed almost accusing.

"He asked a lot of questions."

"Did he?" The caller felt his voice grow weaker.

"About the house and the mistress, and all that!"

"Oh!"

"He was extremely curious."

"Was he now?" The caller felt himself red-denying and longed to depart.

"Too curious!"

Another weak: "Oh!" The caller began to feel more like a prize-fool than ever. Perhaps he would have done better to have entrusted his mission to professional hirelings who didn't get embarrassed and lack confidence.

"You hasn't even the accent of a Tommy," she observed more accusingly.

"Well, you see I'm an American."

"Oh!"

He knew he was *not* getting on, now, and made another friendly effort. "Fine big house, miss!"

"Is it?" she said. "Would you like to know about the rooms?" quickly.

"Not exactly!"

"Or whether her ladyship is married or single, or whether she's home, or—?"

"Of course, you have a pleasant sounding voice, miss, and one does like to hear you talk." He endeavored to speak very gallantly.

"Just what the other one said," she retorted.

"The other one?"

"Returned Tommy!" she answered grimly.

"Any one would say that, miss!" Still he strove to maintain his most ingratiating manner. "Like to hear you talk! It gives *me* an appetite."

"Did they feed you straw-soup?" she asked, boring him with her eyes.

"How did you know?" he observed, as with startled surprise.

"The other one!"

"He must have been where I come from!"

"Maybe!" With a strange look.

"After being fed up so high, I surely appreciates this, miss!"

"So he said! You be as like as two peas!"

"Sure your missus won't mind feeding a poor Tommy like this?"

"She won't!"

"Or the master of the house?" He thought that rather neat. Was there a master? A new one? He would find out. To his disappointment, she did not answer.

"Help yourself," she said. "Eat all you want. I've got to be about my duties."

"You'll come back?" He was a bit dismayed by his lack of success.

"Presently," she said. "You wait—maybe I'll bring you a bite of dessert. Something sweet! Or a nice savory!"

"A savory? That's mighty good of you!" he said with assumed enthusiasm. "I shall wait with pleasure."

He thus remarked inwardly, hoping she would, perhaps, be more talkative when she returned. Somewhat shy—that was all! Not accustomed to men!—would warm up later! Anyhow, he'd get enough out of her to find out how the land lay—

He did. She came in about ten minutes later with a policeman.

"That's the man," she said succinctly. "Talks enough like the other to be an accomplice!"

"What's all this?" began the American.

"Safe up-stairs burglarized the other night, that's all!" said the bobby. "You don't happen to know anything about it? What?—Where'd you get that ten-pound note you have here, in your pocket?" The newcomer's hands had been busy. "Speak up now!" he commanded.

The American swallowed; likewise, he wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"I—I refuse to answer," he managed to murmur.

"Ground of incriminating yourself, eh?" said the bobby good-naturedly. "Come along, my man!"

"Keep a good grip on him," said miss hospitably.

"Jezebel!" said the caller reproachfully. "She feeds and betrays you at the same time."

"Straw-soup!" she answered, nasty-like. "It's my opinion you ayn't never wore the king's uniform."

"And this," ruminated the American as he walked away with the bobby, "is what a chap gets for 'butting in'!"

CHAPTER VIII

“NOW, sir, speak out like a man,” said the sergeant, at the police-station, roughly. “We’ve got you with the goods. Where’d you get this?” Pointing to the ten-pound note. “And this!” Referring to a pearl pin which had been found on the prisoner, and which now lay on the desk, at the police-station.

The American regarded this pin which his lordship had asked him to take care of, for the time being. He had guessed from whence it came, and now knew his lordship had a perfect right to it. Indeed, he had been fairly assured of this when his lordship had asked him to look after it; but he could not explain this and a great deal else. To add to his embarrassment, the complexity of the situation was suddenly augmented by the entrance of another—a very beautiful woman. Her ladyship had been sent for.

“Of course, there’s no doubt of his guilt, your ladyship,” went on the sergeant, turning to the beautiful lady.

“I’m afraid not,” said the lady.

The American suddenly regarded her with strange, widely-opened eyes. She was very lovely, but very sad-looking, too. Her eyes were deep and melting—a little tired-looking—though they gave the impression they might once have been very imperious eyes. They still had their smoldering fires. Her soft lips had once been wilful—perhaps they could be still. Just a slight droop spoke of a past—experience? She carried her head proudly, as she had a right to, thought the American. Her figure was slender and patrician.

“You identify this pin, your ladyship?” went on the police official.

She gazed at it, but did not touch it, and the color slowly mounted to her face, as she nodded her head.

“Good,” said the sergeant. “Have you anything to say, my man?” addressing the American.

“Would it do any good, if I pleaded not guilty?” said the other, with a smile.

“No,” said the sergeant. “Hasn’t her ladyship identified the pin—one of the articles stolen?”

A moment, the American’s eyes met hers and there was in his a light so strange, so compelling, she gazed at him more deeply. His look had no fear; on the contrary, it was confident and kindly—

almost smiling. At that moment he was holding a mental picture of his lordship, like a half-plucked bird, with a broken wing. Surely if her ladyship saw him?—A little pity?—

“Would you like to ask the prisoner any questions, your ladyship?”

Still gazing at the American, she, as if puzzled by his fixed look, hesitated. “The safe was not broken—how did you get in?” she asked.

“If I tell you I didn’t, would you believe me?” he said, with a smile.

“I—I—” She made a little gesture and the weariness returned to her face. “You couldn’t have known the combination,” she said in a low tone.

“He has the requisite delicate fingers, your ladyship,” put in the sergeant. “Sense of feel and sound! Very clever, no doubt! They make them that way, in the States, I’ve been told. ‘A special brand of crooks!’”

At that, she was silent, as if not altogether satisfied; nor did she seem to exult in his capture, or to share that feeling of satisfaction the sergeant betrayed.

“There’s one thing I don’t understand,” she said slowly. “A very valuable broach was not taken—”

“Overlooked in his haste!” said a man’s voice.

A gentleman who had accompanied her ladyship to the police-station, was the speaker—that handsome big chap his lordship had noticed at the house! The American looked at the last speaker, and as he did so, his eyes became hard and gleaming. He recognized the type—the arrogant insolent type. “Stolen that, too, if he’d seen it!” went on the man.

“Do you think so?” The American’s eyes shone now like sunlight gleaming on steel. “I’m no more a thief than you are.”

“Steady, steady!” said the sergeant sternly. “That kind of talk gets you nowhere, my man.”

“I just had to say it, though,” said the prisoner.

“Hardened criminal!” said the gentleman who had accompanied her ladyship. “Hope he gets his full desserts!”

“He shall have justice, Sir George, never fear!”

The American laughed abruptly.

“Why do you laugh?” said the lady, looking at him with eyes that were troubled. “And *did* you not see the broach?”

“I certainly didn’t,” said the American lightly.

“What have you done with the rest of the things you took?” said the sergeant.

“Couldn’t tell you! You see, I didn’t take them.”

"Why do you say that?" said the lady in a puzzled tone.

"Because it is true!" As he spoke, his glance plunged boldly into hers.

"Gargantuan liar—that's what he is!" observed Sir George. "Don't waste any sympathy on him, my dear!" he added to the lady.

"I don't understand, but—he doesn't strike me as a liar."

"For those kind words, many thanks!" said the American, and again a smile, full of meaning, swept his face. If her ladyship only knew—if she only could know? But his lips were sealed, for the moment—indeed, more so now than ever!

"Impudent scoundrel!" said Sir George lazily, but his eyes were like slits.

"Say it some time when I meet you outside," laughed the prisoner.

"Here, here!" said the shocked sergeant. "We're being too easy with you, my man! But it was her ladyship's wish to come right in and see you. Accept my apologies and regrets for the incident, Sir George."

"A little touch of what the Americans call the third degree is what criminals like that need," said Sir George amiably.

"Not at all, Sir George!" said the sergeant stoutly. "Wouldn't comport with British justice at all, sir!"

"I am sorry to go on with this matter," said her ladyship suddenly. "I deeply regret being called into it, and— Suppose I refuse to prosecute, would you not drop the case?"

"Impossible!" cried the shocked official.

"Absurd, my dear!" said Sir George.

"Thank you, just the same!" said the prisoner to the lady. His manner was that of a gentleman! She looked back at him, in going; then the distinguished visitors passed out.

"Now I wonder?" said the American, gazing after her with oddly questioning eyes.

"About those jewels?" said the sergeant.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking about them!"

"Not thinking? You'd better be," sputtered the sergeant.

"Oh, they are not really very important," said the prisoner.

What the sergeant said wouldn't bear repeating. There are certain limits to patience, even among those who help guard and administer strict British justice.

CHAPTER IX

AFTER their windfall of prosperity, the three sons of fortune had abandoned the rather too open hospitality of the public parks for rooms in the vicinity of Tottenham Court Road. Jimmie would have preferred the more congested district of his childhood; his lordship had murmured something about King's Road and Chelsea—near the river; the American had heard of St. John's Wood and its mysterious villas. Jimmie demurred at being near the river; as if he hadn't the shivers and that cold clammy feeling often enough in his rôle of ghost, without seeking the mists of Old Father Thames! In regard to the villas, with their seclusion, he, Jimmie, had also had enough of *stone-walls* and barriers! He didn't want to live behind any of them. He was sure he wouldn't sleep well. So they had compromised on the neighborhood of Tottenham Court, "nice and 'andy to the music-'alls!" Cramped shabby quarters they were, selected by Jimmie, who thought them very fine; his lordship did not care—and the American endured

them, temporarily! For there soon came a time when he did not return to them. One night the American did not "return home."

"Where can he be?" said his lordship wonderingly, the next morning after the American's untoward experience in Belgravia.

"Ayn't that a nice question?" said the little cockney reproachfully. "Can't a gentleman styed out all night without being arsked, 'Where 'as you been'?"

"I suppose so," assented the other wearily.

"A bit of blooming impudence, to arst a gentleman that, I calls it!"

"I dare say," assented the other again. No doubt the little cockney was right.

"I 'opes 'e's 'ad a good time," said the little cockney generously.

"Let us hope so!" From his lordship absently.

"I 'opes 'e's now sleepin' it off, in the lap of luxury."

His lordship had no objection. If any one *could* enjoy himself? He, himself, was feeling rather listless, as if he needed a tonic, or something to wake him up.

"'ow'd you like to 'ave a night of it, yourself?" said the little cockney. "I'm gyme!"

"No, thanks!"

"Brighten you up! You've got stale—that's w'ot's wrong with you!"

"A stale ghost, eh?" laughed his lordship. "If you really want a night of it, let's go and dance on the tombstones!"

"O-o-ow! You give me the chills, you do. Are we down-'earted?"

"No," said his lordship. But his voice was without enthusiasm.

"A 'ell of a day, isn't it?" said the little cockney, gazing out.

"It is," said his lordship.

"I'll take to sweethearting. Cheer me up!"

"I'll take a walk," said his lordship, and suited the action to the word. But the farther he went, the drearier he felt. He tried to pull himself together, but felt the absence of a spine. "The spineless wonder!" he laughed mirthlessly to himself. If only he were fit once more, and could plunge into the vortex of hair-raising activities!

The day had turned foggy—a yellow, thick, soupy fog—and he could not now see many yards before him. Passers-by were blurred, and, more or less, drippy and mournful-looking. Into the apathy of his lordship's brain, a sudden thought insinuated itself. "Some Lung!" Perhaps, if he

could see the little cuss? The recollection of the grip of tiny fingers recurred to him. As the day grew darker, his lordship grew bolder. His footsteps took him toward the lordly mansion and, in front of it, he paused. He felt himself fairly indistinguishable. Dared he?

In that fog, a few feet away, one couldn't tell the difference between a scarecrow and a swell. Both were but blurs of humanity. His lordship mounted the front steps and quickly let himself in. The house was silent. No one about? That appeared to be the case. He experienced an odd expectancy. The "little hollerer"? He certainly wanted to gaze upon him once more, he was telling himself, when from above came a welcome yell. Ha! It was well. His lordship stole upstairs. Madam was not at home—war-work at the hospitals, no doubt! When the cat's away, the mice will play. Nurse had betaken herself to the customary dalliance with coal-man or gas-man. That was a fine high cradle; impossible for Some Lung to fall, or climb, out of it! His lordship gazed about him indignantly. Nursie was, no doubt, supposed to be preambulating Some Lung. There was a perambulator in the lower hall. Poor old Some Lung, thought his lordship! Such a big,

dead sort of a house, for a lively little "some lunger"! Old Joggins, the butler who could hardly see, or hear, was, no doubt, dozing away in some snug corner down-stairs.

"Hello," said his lordship, in a hoarse whisper to Some Lung.

Some Lung responded after his fashion. There was that funny man again, his eyes seemed to say.

"I wonder why I feel such a proprietary interest in you?" said his lordship. "You can't belong—or half-belong to me!"

He felt himself tremble all over at this tremendous speculation. No, no; that was quite impossible, of course!

"All the same you're all right," said his lordship.

Some Lung grinned. He had a sense of humor.

"Darn shame, to keep you cooped up here, isn't it?" said his lordship.

"Goo," said Some Lung which was infantile for "You bet!"

"Hanged if I haven't half a mind—" began his lordship.

'And then what did Some Lung do, but to reach out his chubby little arms.

That settled it! His lordship's "half a mind"

expanded into a full-fledged, adamantine determination.

"You and me go a-perambulating, Some Lung," he said. "We're going to have a dash-dash of a time!"

Some Lung chortled with glee. His lordship lifted him as if he'd been a priceless bit of bric-a-brac, or an unexploded "dud" that needs careful handling; transported his mite of a burden to the lower hall, and there deposited him in an expensive and luxurious preambulator. Some Lung cooed gaily. This was what nursie had cheated him out of. He was getting his just dues, thanks to the funny stranger! Somewhere, in some dim corner in the great dim house, old Joggins, the butler, still dozed or nodded, happily unaware of these dire and terrible proceedings. Somewhere, nursie entertained, or was entertained, blissfully ignorant that Some Lung was being entertained, and having a good time, too. Some Lung lent a glad cooperation to his own kidnaping.

Did he "holler"? Did he yell? Did he let loose those mighty lungs of his, to arouse the house and the neighborhood to what was transpiring? He did not. He looked as if he was trying to keep very still himself, so that no one might hear. He

seemed uncannily wise. His rose-bud mouth seemed to form the word: "~~H~~ush!"

Indeed, at the onset of the adventure, Some Lung showed himself a pal of discretion and understanding. How easy to have "spilled the beans," as the American would say! But Some Lung wasn't that kind of a pal. He even showed a spirit of courage—nay, recklessness—when his lordship almost spilled *him*, out of the perambulator, while transporting him down the front steps to the sidewalk.

"Who cares?" cooed Some Lung when about to descend on his head.

"Goo!"—which is about the same as "Pooh!" or "Fudge!"—his lips ejaculated, as his lordship rescued him, just in time.

His lordship wiped the perspiration from his brow. A perambulator was a mighty perplexing thing when you weren't accustomed to it—especially perambulating down the steep front steps, with the occupant literally courting mishap and disaster. Should you go ahead or behind the blamed thing? Never mind!

His lordship perambulated, while Some Lung sat up and waved his arms. Occasionally, his lordship stopped and tucked him in. They had the best kind

of a time—not the kind of a time nursie, occasionally, condescended to bestow upon Some Lung, when, perforce, she did take him perambulating, because she couldn't get out of it. Nursie always headed for a park, set the perambulator where she could keep an eye on it, and visited with the other nursies, exchanging gossipy titbits. If Some Lung yelled, let him yell! Good for the lungs, say the doctors. Sometimes she strapped Some Lung down, and let him look at the sky—nice, pleasant, monotonous sky! And then—"What is the little tyke hollerin' about?" she would say.

On this occasion Some Lung had a different kind of a pal. He took an interest in Some Lung, and showed him things—a monkey, for example! A monkey, on a string! They had a fine time with the monkey. Some Lung was loath to part from it and wanted to take it along with him, but—

"You couldn't do that, old top, really," said his lordship. "Besides, how could the poor man make a living, if you took his monk., don't you know?"

Some Lung saw the logic of this and waved a resigned, if reluctant, farewell to the beautiful monkey, whose master's heart his lordship had gladdened with half a crown.

Then they had some fun with a toy man, and his

lordship bought about half a peck of cheap toys that nursie would turn up her nose at, but which Some Lung hugged to his bosom with unalloyed, common and democratic enthusiasm. At that moment, Some Lung did not seem to know the difference between aristocratic and low-down, cheap street toys. Perhaps he'd often wanted the paltry variety, but nursie had proudly and haughtily disdained the ragged venders of ha' penny rubbish.

Then his lordship bought Some Lung a little yellow dog. It was a nice dog, said the man in the shop. Some Lung wanted a cat, too, but his lordship thought they might not go well together. This he explained gravely to Some Lung, and Some Lung showed he understood. He didn't insist on the cat, but he pointed to a parrot. Whereupon, his lordship also explained that dogs and parrots do not amalgamate happily. Indeed, put them together, and a reaction sets in. And amid that reaction, where would Some Lung be? No, no; his lordship shook his head apprehensively, and Some Lung shook his, too, there seeming to exist between them a perfect fraternal understanding.

Between the toys and the dog, Some Lung was fairly occupied. Later, his lordship annexed half a dozen balloons to their already growing posses-

sions, fastening the same to the perambulator, and thereby imparting to it a real holiday aspect. They marched on now, right joyously. Dog barked; Some Lung cooed. When dog wasn't barking he licked Some Lung's face. This tickled and made Some Lung laugh. Incidentally, it helped establish a spirit of marvelous amity between dog and Some Lung. By way of friendly retaliation, he tried to pull off dog's tail. Dog seemed to appreciate this and think it fine fun. On and on, went his lordship! He quite forgot about time, or the direction he was going. Peace seemed to have descended upon him. The day was, no longer, dark and dreary.

"Believe I'll show him to them!" he thought, meaning the little cockney and the American! Though he did not know it, his lordship was, at the moment, a bit light-headed. One doesn't get over such fevers as he had had and shell-shock, so quickly! For him, the day seemed to have turned out quite well, after all. He felt a certain contentment. Of course, he would have to return Some Lung pretty soon but there was plenty of time for that. The day was quite young—his lordship ambled on.

"Look at the queer guy!" said some one, encountering his lordship in the fog.

"Thinks it's a bank-holiday, he do!" said some one else, vanishing a moment later.

His lordship did not hear. He was half-smiling.

At the big house, nursie, after a considerable absence, grudgingly sought her charge. She expected to hear a yell as she entered the room. That was the way Some Lung usually greeted her, though whether it was a yell of approval or not, who shall say? She was a little surprised at the absence of the yell. Little "tyke" must have yelled himself out. She stole to the cradle—gasped—Where *was* little "tyke"? Had he gone out? But how? She gazed around. Then hastily she sought Joggins!

"Where is it?" she said.

"What?" said Joggins.

"The hollerer! I just turned my back, to get a drink of water, and when I came back, it was gone."

"Gone?" said Joggins, rubbing his sleepy eyes.

"That's what I said!" Sharply. "What have you done with it?"

"Me?" said Joggins.

"'ave done with this joking," she said more sharply still. "Of course, I know you've—you've—"

"I haven't been near it," said Joggins. "And it's my opinion you haven't been, either, for a long time."

"You mind your own business!" But though there was anger in her tone, there was alarm, too.

And good reason for alarm too, for at that moment her ladyship entered the house. Nursie wrung her hands.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she said, while poor old Joggins stood in a stupor.

"Why?" said her ladyship, staring at the empty cradle. "Where?"

Nursie had hysterics.

"It's gone," Joggins managed to ejaculate.

"What the devil?" said a man's voice. "Have you searched the house?"

They searched—frantically.

"Perambulator's gone," said miss, her ladyship's maid.

"This looks like a case of kidnaping," said Sir George viciously.

"Send for the doctor!" cried miss.

"Send for the police!" said Sir George.

Joggins rushed to the telephone. He wanted to think. Sir George sustained her. ladyship and swore.

Nursie sat up. "I only turned my back on it, for a moment," she wailed. "It's my opinion the ghosts got it."

"What ghosts?" said Sir George.

"How do I know? Only I has heard sounds. Perhaps, the old master has come back, to haunt the place?" Nursie hardly knew what she was saying—Only if she *could* shift the responsibility to some supernatural agency?

"The old master?" said Sir George.

"The young lord that was." Incoherently.

Sir George started. "You're a fool!" he said.

And Joggins, returning, heard.

"Maybe it *was* a ghost," he said queerly.

"You're a parcel of fools!" said Sir George.

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir. They'll be here directly, sir. The police, I mean!"

And Joggins said nothing further about ghosts.

CHAPTER X

THE day following that on which his lordship had gone perambulating, Jimmie sent for Old Sweetheart, for if ever there was a time when Jimmie needed a "mother's help," it was now. Misfortunes had followed fast and sure; perplexities had heaped upon him until under the load of trouble, Jimmie felt he, too, might suffer a relapse. There was a dire uncertainty about an unexpected situation that boded ill; this situation was none of Jimmie's making; nevertheless, he was engulfed by it and his nerves were on edge.

"'ere's a bloody go, ayn't it now?" he muttered one morning, a few days after Old Sweetheart had appeared on the scene.

"Things might be worse, dearie," she replied optimistically.

"'ow?" he snapped. "Look at 'im!" Pointing to his lordship who lay in bed, a faint smile on his fever-flushed features and a number of medicine bottles on a shelf near by. "Look at *it*!" Pointing to Some Lung who occupied a part of the bed next to the wall. "Not to mention *that*!"

Jerking a finger at little yellow dog at the foot of the bed. "Or them!" Referring to sundry balloons tied to the posts of the bed, and floating gaily against the ceiling. "When I took 'em down, 'e would 'ave 'em up. Thinks it's Christmas time, or May-day, or somethink!"

"Let 'im have 'is little whims, dearie," said the assuaging voice. "When they're off their top like that, better be 'umorin' them!"

"W'ot is it?" said the little cockney. "A 'orspital, a menagerie, or a nursery? And where did 'e get it?" Glaring at Some Lung.

"Goo!" said Some Lung.

"'ear 'im, the dash, dash little hangel!" chuckled the lady, reaching for a sip of gin. "Makes me think of you, dearie, when you were young and in-nercent."

"Aw!" said Jimmie disgustedly. "Stow it! W'ot I'd like to know is where does it"—pointing an accusing finger at Some Lung—"belong?"

"'e seems to like it 'ere," said the lady. "'ear 'im chuckle! 'e thinks you want to plye a game with 'im."

"Aw!" More disgustedly.

"Mybe 'e got it out of a' orphan-asylum. It ayn't none of your funeral, anyhow."

"I 'ates babies," said the little cockney viciously.

"And you such a blessed little hangel once yourself, dearie! W'ot would the world be without babies? Bless their 'earts! Give me a tot of gin and a baby, and I'm 'appy. A nice fat baby, and a comfortin' bottle o' gin!"

"The gin's all right," said the little cockney. "But I draws the line"—with a sneer—"to the nice fat baby. A bloomin' nuisance, I calls 'em."

"There! 'e thinks you're plying with 'im again," she exclaimed. "Shake your fist at 'im again, Jimmie!"

"I won't!" Sullenly.

"'e likes it."

Jimmie exploded. Some Lung cooed and dog barked. His lordship talked rubbish. Old Sweetheart chuckled.

"A 'appy family!" said Jimmie, glaring around him.

"That's what it is," said Old Sweetheart.

"Bedlam!" said Jimmie.

"'appy, and 'ome-like, says I! I ayn't never 'ad a more 'ome-like feelin'. Plenty to eat and plenty to drink! Nothink 'ardly to do, but to sit still! With a pub, right next door and some one to wyte on you! I ayn't never 'ad anybody before

would bring me the comfortin' drop, Jimmie. I always 'ad to go and get it. And me, with my bones that tottering! It's a comfort, Jimmie, to 'ave some one wyte on you, in your declinin' old age. It's the climbin' of the stairs that I 'ates. When I thinks 'ow often I 'ad to go up and down, for a tot—"

"You couldn't have done without, I suppose?"

She overlooked the insinuation. "And now, to be sittin' 'ere, wearing diamonds!"

Jimmie stirred uneasily. Old Sweetheart's dress was adorned with sundry bright ornamentations. She preened herself luxuriously, ablaze with glory.

"I 'as always dreamed of wearin' diamonds, dearie. Ayn't they becomin'?"

"I 'opes," said Jimmie, "they was 'onest come by. I only 'ad 'is word for it."

"And isn't that enough? Ayn't 'e the little doubter, though! Of course, they was 'onest come by, or I wouldn't be wearin' of them. Speakin' of which, w'ot's the use 'avin' diamonds, if you can't be showin' of them? Lettin' the neighbors be seein' of them!"

"Do you think it syfe?" Uneasily. "'ow would you be accountin' for them?"

"From an admirer, Jimmie! An old, old admirer!"

"'iggins?" said Jimmie, nasty-like.

"'iggins come to life! I could have 'im come to life, couldn't I?"

"'eavens!" exclaimed Jimmie. "Ayn't they enough of us come to life?"

"And wouldn't it be romantic, dearie? 'e was werry fond of me, before I married your father, Jimmie."

"But they ayn't yours to wear," observed Jimmie uneasily.

"I'll be only a-borrowin' of them, Jimmie. 'e won't mind." Referring to his lordship who was lying quite still and peaceful, with the little yellow dog licking his hand. "Poor dear 'e's out of 'is 'ead, and wouldn't know. Besides, look 'ow I've nursed 'im! Watchin' for the 'ours to come, to give 'im 'is medicine! 'asn't I been faithful? 'asn't I stood by 'im?"

Jimmie looked at the bottle of gin. "You 'as stood by *it*," he said.

She overlooked the neuter pronoun.

"'is benefactress, that's w'ot I am! And if anythink should 'appen to 'im—which 'eaven forbid!—mybe 'e'd make me 'is 'eiress, dearie! I

'as always dreamed of bein' an 'eiress, dearie, and mybe that would be better to tell, than 'avin' 'iggins come back."

"Mybe it would," said Jimmie absently.

"Poor dear!" She approached the bed and laid a sympathetic hand on his lordship's fevered brow.

"G-r-r-r-" said the little yellow dog.

"Nasty little beast!" said she.

"G-r-r-r-" said yellow dog once more.

"What a soft touch!" murmured his lordship.

"Still off his top!" said Jimmie.

"Yow!" yelled Some Lung.

"Sweet little dear, ayn't he?" said Old Sweet-heart admiringly.

His lordship opened an eye. "Fine! Some Lung," he murmured.

Then he closed the eye again.

"Where'd you get it?" said the little cockney, desperately, to his lordship. "'ere, wyke up, and tell us? Where'd you pick it up?" Pointing to Some Lung. His lordship did not answer. His features had resumed that peaceful smile.

"Can't you tell us?" said Jimmie, once more. "Oh, w'ot's the use!" Resignedly. "First, 'e goes out and comes 'ome with ten-pun notes and crown-jewels. Next 'e goes out and brings back this little

hangel. 'ow, or where, or why? If 'e 'asn't a lamp to rub, I give it up!"

"What a pity 'e can't get up and go out again," said Old Sweetheart practically. "Think w'ot 'e might bring 'ome!"

"It might be a' helephant," said Jimmie. "It might be a' rhinocerus, or a hypo. 'e might chynge the place into a bloomin' Noah's Hark. What with hinfants, and a real dog and toy dogs, and other animiles and Jumpin'-Jacks, 'e's made a good start."

"I'll start, too, Jimmie," she said. The gin bottle now was empty. "'ere's a bottle and some hinfant's food for the little hangel. And a bit of bone for the dog! And the medicine for 'im! Don't be mixin' them up, Jimmie, and be givin' the bone to the little hangel, and the medicine to the dog."

"Go easy with the jewels, Old Sweetheart," said Jimmie. "Wait till you get some clothes to go with them. Then I'll tyke you to the theater, and you shall sit in a box."

She sighed. The advice was good and she knew it. But oh, the joy that might have been hers—the envy of the neighbors! Real jewels, and miss who dispensed liquid joy wore only imitations! Tu'penny rings—and old coral broaches, and the like—that was what the like of them wore! And

wore with conscious superiority. "I suppose, I'll 'ave to wear 'em under the ole shawl, Jimmie," she murmured regretfully. "I can see as 'ow it wouldn't do. They might not tyke a lydy's word, as 'ow they was come by! Anyhow, *I'll* be knowin' I 'as 'em on and *could* 'old up my 'ead with the best of them! Good day, Jimmie."

"'ave a good time, Old Sweetheart," said the little cockney. "Mybe I'd better go to the police-station about it!" Indicating Some Lung.

"I don't know. Police-stations is good plyces to keep away from, Jimmie!"

"Mybe you're right," said Jimmie doubtfully. "Looks like a 'ell of a mess to me!" Hopelessly.

"'ear him! And rollin' in blessin's!"

"A 'ell of a mess!" repeated Jimmie despondently. "Where's '*im*, I'd like to know? My American pal! There's a 'ole lot of things I'd like to know." Gloomily. "Mybe some one 'as been doin' 'im in. Mybe 'e can't be a bleedin' ghost, no more. Mybe 'e's pushin' up the daisies, for keeps. 'e *was* a good pal!" Jimmie's voice was sepulchral. "When I thinks 'ow good a pal 'e *was*—"

"Don't think, darlin'! Cheer up."

"'ow can I?" With almost a groan.

"If you can't, you can't. Anyhow, I'll tell you what I'll do, dearie."

"W'ot?" said Jimmie, as from a tomb.

"I'll cheer up for both of us, dearie!"

"Thank you," said Jimmie. "I'm sure that's werry kind of you. But you allus was a kind old sweetheart—" Here emotion seemed to oppress Jimmie. "The best o' luck!" Old Sweetheart went.

She went, but she didn't return. A day and a night passed, and still she didn't return. Jimmie got gloomier and gloomier. He fed Some Lung the milk; yellow dog, another bone, and his lordship, his medicine. In his triple rôle of nursemaid, doctor and canine attendant, Jimmie developed the rankest pessimism. "A bloody mess, and a little bit more of it!" he murmured.

"Goo!" said Some Lung happily. Some optimist!

"Wow! wow!" said yellow dog blithely.

"Haw! haw!" laughed his lordship in a delirium.

"You go to 'ell," said Jimmie nastily, and turned his back on the lot of them.

CHAPTER XI

THE magistrate of a famous old police court, at Bow Street, was in ill-humor, one morning, as, before ascending the bench and assuming the duties of the day, he scanned his morning *Thunderer*. He read his *Times* daily, as a habit, but of late with secret rising displeasure. That tendency to longer and blacker head-lines was an innovation he could not approve of; here and there an approach to "enterprise," even sensation, in news-getting, was an offense to the tradition of his forefathers. The editorials, too, lacked their old-time Addison stateliness; he no longer experienced that feeling of smug satisfaction which comes with the reading of words that march along in ponderous fashion, as from a volume of the *Spectator*. The "agony-column" (curious anomaly!) still was there—the gods be praised!—but, after all, this was but a sop to Cerebus. He was about to throw aside the honorable and ancient, but now offending sheet, when a short article, concerning the doings of the night before of the House of Parliament, caught his eye. An expression of gratification immediately replaced annoyance on his features; so

they had done it—passed the new act!—under the stress of the times! He had hardly thought the Commoners would have the intelligence to move so quickly. Well, it was a compliment to the bench, and to the acumen of those who administered British justice. So he forgot and forgave for the moment the pernicious tendencies of modern journalism, and feeling in much better humor with himself and the world in general took his seat on the bench.

He was in this happier mood when the American of whose case he had already been informed, was brought before him.

“Well, what have you to say for yourself?” he asked benignly, after the preliminaries of opening the day’s business had been attended to.

“Nothing,” said the American.

The magistrate frowned. “What did you do with the rest of the loot?” he asked more curtly.

“I can’t tell you. I didn’t have it.”

The other studied the prisoner a moment. “Her ladyship has, generously, made a special plea for mercy, in your case. Without a full confession, I may say, however, any leniency would be quite impossible. It will be my duty to give you the limit of the law.”

The American smiled. He looked at Sir George, who was alone, her ladyship not being well enough to be present.

"I really fail to see how you *can* sentence me," drawled the prisoner.

"Eh?" said the now rather surprised magistrate.

"His Majesty's government has made that impossible."

"Eh?" said the magistrate once more.

"I am quite immune—in fact, beyond the law!" laughed the prisoner.

"Are you preparing for a plea of insanity?" said the august one. Having a true English magisterial sense of humor, a little debate was sometimes welcome in those dingy halls—especially as the august one, of course, came out on top. For this reason, perhaps, he was not averse, on occasion, to sentencing a prisoner, with a bit of bon-mot, or a light *jeu d'esprit* to add zest to the sentence. After all, the joke was on the prisoner, and a light quibble, or a quotation from *Punch*, helped the magisterial digestion. Besides, the sometimes despised press occasionally quoted him!

"Not at all, your lordship," said the American. "Such a subterfuge would be too easily punctured by one of your lordship's discernment."

"Ah?" said his lordship, rubbing his hands. A prisoner with spirit was like an oasis in the dreary desert of his dull daily duties.

"Besides, it would be superfluous."

"Q. E. D.," now laughed his lordship.

The prisoner bowed, and Sir George looked bored.

"You see," said the prisoner gently, "your lordship couldn't sentence me, because there is nothing to sentence."

"No?" said his lordship, elevating an august brow. "Why?"

"Your lordship has quoted Latin. I have little learning—although, I suppose, I should know *dead* languages!—I will respond with two words that just happen to cling to my memory. I am *non est!*"

"So?" said the august one. "I see you, and yet I see you not, as Macbeth says! Is that it?"

"It is! You do not! You only *think* you do."

"An idle coinage of the brain—that's what you are, eh?" chuckled the magistrate.

"Exactly!" said the prisoner.

"You look like 'too, too solid flesh' to me."

"A fallacy! The question is, your lordship, when one has paid the debt of nature, has he not paid all debts?"

"Earthly? Perhaps. Of course there's his debt to a higher—"

"Your lordship does not sit in that capacity," said the American, with a gentle smile.

"Hum!" said his lordship, not quite so amiably.

"The government of His Majesty—God bless him!—has decreed my non-existence. Can I present to your lordship a better alibi than that?"

"Ha!" said the magistrate.

"The question is: There being nothing to sentence, how could your lordship do it? Your lordship has much wisdom, but could your lordship preempt the Creator's prerogatives?"

The magistrate stared harder. This prisoner did not need a lawyer. His lordship felt he had to look out for his own laurels.

"Could your lordship, unofficially, breathe life into that which is, officially, turned to dust?"

"Show the cards!" said his lordship more curtly.

The prisoner did—official list, identification tag—and all that! The magistrate was, for a few moments, silent.

"If your lordship pleases—" began Sir George, rising.

"Don't interrupt," said the magistrate more testily. Instead of bon-mots and *jeu d'esprit*, he

was "against" what began to look like a new problem. Those official lists!—confound them! When a person had been declared officially defunct, would he not have to be declared officially alive, before, in the eyes of the law, he might be so recognized? And to what degree, between the two degrees—the interim—could he be held, officially, responsible?

His lordship glowered ill-naturedly at the prisoner. Then suddenly he brightened. He recalled that article in the *Times*. "That's all very well," he said. "And very clever, no doubt, but—" He shook a stubby condemnatory finger at the prisoner. That finger seemed to say: "I've got you."

"There's that special act of Parliament," he said softly, "giving a magistrate unusual powers—very great license—just passed, with hardly a dissenting voice! How apropos!"

"Would it enable your lordship to sentence a—"

"It might," said the august one. "It might." Rubbing his hands. This was turning the tables very prettily—very neatly, indeed! He began to feel quite cheerful once more. Under its provisions a magistrate was given truly, exceedingly great latitude. War-time expediency—upsetting to usual

formulas and traditions! Ha, ha! An inward ha! ha! This would do to tell at the club. It would go well with the duck and the port. It would aid digestion.

"Acting under the special act, I might even hang you," said the august one softly. "And no questions asked! For thus, I interpret the special act! That you do not exist is of no moment."

"In that case," said the prisoner, "I can only throw myself upon the mercy of the court."

That was better. The magistrate beamed. "Keep him good-natured, and I may not get the limit," thought the prisoner. "Let him come out ahead! Look very much downcast!"

The prisoner did. Battle of wits, indeed, with one of his lordship's acumen! Did his lordship feel that thrill of generosity which comes with victory? Or did he perhaps have a few secret doubts about just how far the actual latitude of the special act went?

"I'll take the case under advisement," he stated. Sir George arose as if to address the bench.

"Why was not her ladyship in court?" said the august one sharply, interrupting whatever Sir George had intended saying.

"Her ladyship has suffered a greater loss than jewels and money. Her ladyship is prostrated."

As he spoke, Sir George went over to the august one and said something for him, alone.

"Bless my soul!" said the magistrate, and stared at the prisoner. "This is very shocking! Hard to believe!"

"I don't know what it is, your lordship," said the American, "but I didn't do it."

The magistrate made a brusque gesture and the American was escorted hence.

At this moment, there was loud wailing near the portals of the door. A bejeweled old woman was brought in by two bobbies.

CHAPTER XII

BY woman's vanity is woman undone. Old Sweetheart was animated by the best and most prudent of motives when she embarked on a self-consoling mission for old haunts. That she discarded these and was, thereby, led into deep and bitter pitfalls was due to circumstances, and temptations, quite beyond feminine control. She found all the old faces, in the dear old disreputable joint whither instinct unerringly directed her. Same old worn benches; same old sawdust strewn floor; same old smelly bar! Old Sweetheart sniffed like a war-horse at the breath of conflict.

"We 'asn't seen you, for a day or two," said miss, a shade more amiably than usual.

"No," said Old Sweetheart. "I 'as been a-vis-itin'—a bit of 'igh-life, miss!"

"No doubt!" said miss, tossing her head, and sticking up her nose.

The gesture irritated Old Sweetheart. Miss was now gazing superciliously beyond her, the while she raised a more or less lily-white hand seemingly to adjust a false curl or two—really to display a

cheap imitation pearl, ruby and sapphire ring! That ring was to Old Sweetheart what a red rag is to a bull, arousing her ire at once.

"I see you 'ave á new ring," she said.

"I 'as," said miss languidly, as if priceless jewels and she were not such strangers. "Oh, yes; I like a new ring, occasionally!" She said this most superior-like. She didn't look over Old Sweetheart's shoulder now; she looked over her head. "Was you thinkin' of tykin' anythink?" she asked, in that same exasperating tone.

"A bit of old Hollands—the best!" Sharply. "I didn't think much of the last I got 'ere."

"W'ot was the matter with it?" said miss curtly.

"It 'ad a' *himitation*-flavor," said Old Sweetheart, looking at the ring.

"Imitation?" said miss. "'as you the gin in mind, or somethink else?"

Old Sweetheart took the gin. "There's real jewels, and there's himitation," she observed sweetly. At the same time the proud consciousness of real jewels burning on her breast, beneath the old shawl, imparted a strange mysterious look to her bleary eyes. "There's them that 'as himitation, and there's them—" She checked herself.

Miss's lip curled. "The likes of you talking about jewels!" that expression said scornfully. "I'll take the pay now," she said to Old Sweetheart.

"Aren't you in a bit of a 'urry?" said Old Sweetheart. "Think you ayn't going to get it?"

Miss didn't answer and Old Sweetheart glowered. Asking her for the pay before she'd fairly sipped the tot! The impudence of the hussy! And her (Old Sweetheart) with priceless jewels a-burning on her breast! She paid with a five-pound note. Miss didn't seem to be overwhelmed at its denomination, though she scrutinized it carefully.

"That's the wye I pay," said Old Sweetheart, trotting over to a corner with her tot. "I 'as been accustomed to 'aving it brought to me, where I 'as been!"

"On a silver platter, I suppose?" said miss.

"It might 'ave been! It was a 'igh-class plyce, where you meets 'igh-class young lydies, from Piccadilly Circus, and gentlemen in 'igh 'ats!"

"W'ot was you doin' there? Scrubbin' out?"

This was nearly too much for Old Sweetheart who almost, then and there, displayed the jewels. Only by an effort she refrained, and instead took a deep swallow of "widow's comfort." Then she

had another, and several! And the more she had, the deeper grew her resentment.

The hussy employed her hand with innumerable affected gestures that exhibited her tawdry acquisition. The false curls simply wouldn't stay adjusted. People commented on the ring. Others had to show their tawdry possessions. And Old Sweetheart had to sit there, silent, unboastful, the while, beneath the enshrouding shawl, she glowed like another Queen of Sheba. It was very annoying. Old Sweetheart chafed beneath the constraint, and the more she drank, the more she chafed.

"I 'as others at 'ome," said miss loftily.

"Himitation!" Sotto voce from Old Sweetheart.

"And would the likes of you be knowing the difference?" said miss.

Now for the dramatic moment! Still Old Sweetheart valiantly refrained. A few bubbles of caution yet mingled with seething resentment and a crowning desire to shine. Was there greater torture than this? To possess fine jewels, for the first time in your life, and be forced to conceal the possession of them from a gaping, admiring and envious world! Oh, the delight, *to* inspire envy! She had never had the wherewithal before, and now

that she had it, she could not exercise the privileges which rightfully should have been hers. Very tantalizing, very! And miss and the others preening themselves over paltry rubbish—Whitechapel jewels!—sold from carts, no doubt, by the hook-nosed gentry!

“Poor old thing, a-sousin’ of ’erself with the insurance money of her dead and gone hangel-son,” said miss. “And w’ot’ll she do when it’s gone?”

“Public-charge, I’m thinking,” said a hawker of cabbages who dropped in, occasionally, to get warm.

Old Sweetheart seethed with greater indignation. She had several more tots; then she arose with great dignity.

“Himitation!” she said to miss.

Whereupon—gin getting the better of caution—she deliberately opened the shawl.

“There’s some that ’as himitations—which is quite good enough for the likes of them—and there’s some that ’as *real*!”

For a moment, she quite enjoyed her triumph. Miss looked dumfounded. A gentleman, with a Hebraic nose, and the air of a connoisseur, gazed closer.

"My Gowd!" he exclaimed with profound emotion. "Ayn't they beauties?"

"And *real!*" said Old Sweetheart, in withering tones to miss.

"They are certainly genooine," he said in dazed tones.

Old Sweetheart swelled. She tried to draw herself up in her proudest manner, but it was rather difficult to stand straight, after all the "comforting" she had had from the square black bottle.

"No cheap himitations for me," she said haughtily, reaching for another tot.

"Where'd you get 'em?" said the shabby little expert-man in a tone rather strained.

"From an old admirer," said Old Sweetheart in her most frivolous tones, swaying dizzily. "From Mr. 'iggins!"

"Him's been dead, this thirty years," said a kind neighbor.

"'e's come back," said Old Sweetheart. "Nothing like 'avin' your romance! "'e 'as diamond-mines—"

The little Hebrew man slipped out quietly, possibilities of reward looming large in his strictly practical and commercial brain. 'And from his slip-

ping out, to that woeful wailing; heard by the American, in the historic police-station, there had been but a simple and natural progression of events.

"Here's his accomplice," said the bobby, as the American passed, after his memorable experience with the magistrate.

"I never saw her before," said the American.

"It's my opinion," said the bobby, "that his name is 'iggins!'"

CHAPTER XIII

AS THE days went by, and still no sight of Old Sweetheart, Jimmie's spirits continued to go down and down, until he groped in a veritable abyss of gloom. Old Sweetheart seemed to have completely vanished in thin air. It was certainly most unlike her to disappear from the neighborhood of the high-toned pub, with plenty of funds—aside from insurance money!—to insure an indefinite continuance of the merry little tots. What had happened to her? Had she gone out and got lost? Why, she could shut her eyes and find her way through London lanes and alleys, as puzzling as the maze of Hampton Court! No, she couldn't get lost—unless she was suffering from loss of memory, or identity—one of those queer mental diseases Jimmie couldn't remember the name of.

Then Jimmie thought of the diamonds Old Sweetheart had worn—jewels like those sported by the wives of Maharajahs! What an incentive to crime! Jimmie had visions of one of those dark mysterious London canals, bearing an inanimate form on, on!—silently, gruesomely!—to the broad

flowing river. At this point, Jimmie suffered a mild attack of the horrors! To make matters worse, now that Old Sweetheart had gone, there was the baby to wash! Added to his other duties, this was "some job!" Fortunately, Some Lung was good-natured and thought Jimmie just wanted "to plye" when he held him up by one leg and swabbed him down. But this was no recreation for Jimmie whose rounded anathemas mingled picturesquely with Some Lung's coo-coos. Oh, if only his American pal would come back! Jimmie felt the urgent need of reinforcements. His soul revolted. At times he longed to open the window and call out: "'elp, 'elp!" Only a sense of prudence caused him to refrain. It was on one of these occasions his lordship returned to rationality.

"Hello!" said his lordship, unexpectedly looking around. "Here we are! Or—where are we?"

"You may well sye that," said Jimmie.

"Hello!" said his lordship once more—this time specifically to Some Lung! "You there?"

Some Lung gurgled. It was one way of saying: "Yes."

"Hello!" said his lordship a third time. 'As he spoke, he looked at yellow dog. "I remember you!"

Yellow dog responded to the salutation and the

compliment. He was vastly flattered to be remembered, and exhibited his pleasure in sundry barks and a lively athletic performance. He was here, there, everywhere. He knocked over Some Lung.

"Hello," said his lordship. And looked at the balloons! "That's all right," he added. Probably he meant he remembered them, too.

"Bird with one note, you are!" sneered the little cockney.

His lordship studied the balloons. "Ought they not to be moving along?" he asked.

"Sort of a procession, eh?" observed Jimmie.

"That's it," said his lordship gravely, and, for a moment, seemed puzzled.

"Hello!" he chirped, still again.

"Bird with one—"

His lordship did not hear; he was staring hard at a perambulator. "That's where they belong," he said gravely, referring to the balloons. "They should be moving on!"

"You don't sye so?" said the little cockney in the same nasty tone.

"Yes," said his lordship. "Why—if I may inquire, without offense—for your tone does not seem exactly reassuring—are we stationary?"

"You mean, why aren't you shoving it"—re-

ferring to the perambulator—"with 'im"—Some Lung—"and that"—yellow dog—"and them"—balloons—"floatin' hidiotically in the air?"

"Something like that!" said his lordship who had listened attentively. "I dare say, I mean something like that."

"You ayn't shovin' 'im and it and them, because"—viciously—"you're 'ere."

"That seems apparent," said his lordship patiently. "May I inquire how long—?"

"'undreds of years," said the little cockney. "Or so it 'as seemed to me, w'ot with me feedin' 'im the milk-bottle, and it the bone, and you the pills and other things. W'ot with me tyking empty bottles to be filled, and 'ustlin' for medicine, and 'unting for canine-vittels! W'ot with 'aving to listen to hidiot-talk from your lips, and goo-goos from 'im, and yellin's from it—'undreds of years, I sye, does seem the hanswer!"

His lordship sat up. "Things seem kind of mixed-up," he said, holding his hand to his forehead.

"Mixed-up?" said Jimmie. "That ayn't describing it."

"All in a muddle," muttered his lordship.

"'ell of a 'ash, I should call it," said the little

cockney. "Regular maconochie-stew, like w'ot they gives the Tommies—full of 'orrors!"

"Is it as bad as that?" queried his lordship gently. "Perhaps, I'll get at the ends of the tangled threads presently. But my mind is, for the moment, in rather a whirl."

"Loopin' the loop, in your 'ead, eh?" said the other. "Mybe it's as well you *don't* know!" With a groan. "Where hignorance is bliss—"

His lordship stroked Some Lung. "Ha!" he said suddenly, a vague apprehension beginning to appear in his eyes.

"If I 'adn't been a good pal I'd 'a' chucked the 'ole bloomin' show," said the little cockney bitterly. "W'ot 'as I got by styng? W'ot 'appened to 'er? And to 'im? 'im that was a proper pal? I arsk you that! Gone west! And 'er was a proper old sweetheart, too. Didn't she give me a 'appy childhood? It's my opinion they done 'er for the jewels. Hup a dark alley, most like! 'er wouldn't stay away from 'ere, otherwise!"

"Dear me!" said his lordship. "From your conversation I still seem very much up in the air. I can't make head or tail out of it. A moment since, it seems to me I was just beginning to grasp something, too—something painful—"

"It would be," said the little cockney. "If you know when you're well off, you'll stay dotty! You ayn't got anything to gain by comin' to."

"Still one does like to know," said his lordship. "One likes to look facts in the face."

"No; you wouldn't like it," said the other. "Just get that idea out of your bloomin' top! And if you've got any sense left, stye a' hidiot!"

"But really—" expostulated his lordship. "One couldn't take such advice. It wouldn't do—really now! Not the thing, at all! One doesn't—stye a' hidiot, as you put it—Deuced bad form, I should say! One really couldn't—"

"Couldn't one?" sneered Jimmie. "If I was to tell you all that's 'appened, and w'ot's likely to 'appen, it's my opinion you'd become a bloomin' hidiot, all over again, if you ayn't one now."

"All that's happened," said his lordship. "I—I believe I've been ill."

"No, you 'asn't," said the little cockney in his most sarcastic tone. "You've just been lyin' 'ere, bein' fed pills because you *likes* 'em."

"Dear me," said his lordship.

"By the peck!"

"Let me think," said his lordship. "I must collect myself a bit."

"Goo!" said Some Lung.

"Ha!" said his lordship. He *was* collecting himself now. Some Lung got his poor fuddled brain started on the right and rational, if somewhat painful, path. "Great Scott!"

"That's mild, for w'ot you ought to sye," observed the little cockney, with another sneer.

"Good heavens!" said his lordship.

"Still too mild—"

"How long have I been ill?" In an awed super-painful tone.

"A few days—more like a 'undred years—"

"A few *days?*" Gazing at Some Lung with wildly fascinated eyes. "Did you say *days?*"

"Days!—that seemed like 'undreds—"

"Days!" repeated his lordship. "And he has been here, all that time?" Regarding Some Lung.

"Would you 'ave me chuck the kid out the window?" Sulkily. "Although there 'as been times—"

"They—will miss it," said his lordship weakly.

"You—you borrowed it, without arsking?" Satirically.

"Something like that!" From his lordship faintly.

The little cockney began to whistle.

"I'm afraid," repeated his lordship, "they— they will miss it."

"Oh, no! A little thing like that! Fudge! Pooh!" Jimmie whistled louder. "Only a byby! Nothink to worry about! Forget it!"

"She—she," said his lordship, articulating with difficulty, "will miss it—"

"She?"

"The—the—the mother," stammered his lordship.

"Mother! Pooh! Fudge!" The little cockney whistled again. He indulged in about half a bar of nice cheerful music. "Did you say— mother?"

"I—did," said his lordship in a low tone.

"Oh, mybe she won't notice it?—Only the mother—" He shrugged. "Nothink to worry about, I should sye! Not a thing!"

"I—I must take it back," began his lordship.

"I wouldn't 'urry." Ironically. "A few days more or less—w'ot's the 'urry?"

"Great heavens!" said his lordship once more. "I must get up."

He tried to, but fell back.

"I seem a bit weak," he faltered. "This won't do. Not at all! Really—"

"Mybe you could crawl along the pyvement, and shove it along," suggested Jimmie.

His lordship stared at the ceiling. "Of course, he must be returned at once," he said.

"Kidnaping!" said the little cockney ominously. "It's a pretty sentence we'll be getting."

"If I could only get up—"

"Wait till you're strong enough. A few days more or less won't matter." Satirically.

"No, no," said his lordship feverishly. "At once! He must be returned at once!"

"With what explanations?" Ironically.

"None! One couldn't explain—could one, now?—Really?"

"But how? You can't be wheelin' of 'im—"

"I can't, but—but—" more feverishly.

"But—?" said the little cockney, in a weirdly fascinated voice.

"You can!"

"Me?"

"You!"

What the little cockney said was not strictly orthodox. He went out and slammed the door. He departed sans Some Lung and, to make matters worse, his lordship suffered a relapse.

CHAPTER XIV

OLD SWEETHEART had proved a very unsatisfactory prisoner. She wearied the attendants with her whims; as a lodger, she was constantly complaining of her bed and board, casting aspersions upon those who administered His Majesty's funds for the up-keep of His Majesty's institutions. What she said to the sergeants, made them squirm, and at times her wailing filled the corridor. Every one was heartily tired of her. And then came the day when the magistrate was to take a "whack" at her.

"Is she sober enough to be questioned, sergeant?" said the magistrate.

"Quite sober, sir, I should say, for her."

So Old Sweetheart was ushered in—a thousand times more disreputable-looking than ever, if that were possible.

"Now," said the magistrate sternly, "no shilly-shallying! Let's get at the truth."

"I 'asn't yet 'ad my morning tot," complained Old Sweetheart.

"Can't you tell the truth, without it?" Sternly.

"It might loosen my tongue a bit!" Insinuatingly.

"You'll have to loosen it, without."

"And me, that 'usky—"

"Where did you get the jewels?"

Old Sweetheart hesitated how to answer. Involve Jimmie? Her "angel-child!" Never! "Perhaps if I 'ad the tot—?" she fenced.

"Answer!"

"And me, that 'usky." Her bleary eyes were like those of a rat in a trap.

He read her a long lecture, calculated to move a heart of stone. "And now," he said, "what have you got to say?"

"I 'asn't 'ad my morning—"

"Answer!" he thundered.

Did he annihilate Old Sweetheart? Did she wither and quake, beneath the awful sternness of those tones? She did not. A new and cogent dignity seemed to descend upon her disreputable shoulders and she drew herself up. She met the magisterial eye with unflinching gaze. Did she answer in the words he would have forced from her lips? She did not.

"Speak!" he thundered. "The truth—"

"The truth? Your lordship shall 'ave it. And 'ere it is: *I 'aven't yet 'ad my morning tot!*"

She looked really quite imposing, at that moment, an Amazon-Ajax defying the lightnings, or a true Britisher, standing on her rights, if you please!

The magistrate sputtered. This was very upsetting to official dignity. He imagined the sergeant was striving to suppress a smile.

"And if 'e," went on Old Sweetheart, indicating the sergeant, "says I 'ave 'ad it, it's 'e w'ot ayn't telling the truth!"

"She talked a good deal about a Mr. 'iggins, your lordship," ventured the sergeant, smoothing the lower part of his face with his hand. "While sleeping off the gin!"

"Probably the man that kidnaped the child, or helped her!" said the magistrate. "Now you might as well—" Here he read another lecture to Old Sweetheart. Jewels!—child!—work of the same desperate gang. Old Sweetheart's very bearing and bravado showed she was a hardened old sinner. At the word child, Old Sweetheart had started, and the magistrate noticed.

Ha! Some Lung! This looked bad for Jimmie, thought Old Sweetheart, though why he should

have stolen the child was beyond her comprehension. Still her angel-boy must be protected, at all hazards. For his own sake, and—there was the insurance money, not yet all spent! To arrest Jimmie, would be equivalent to resurrecting him—and taking the balance of the insurance money away—Old Sweetheart began to “tighten up” still further. Also, she began to display some artfulness. She assumed a frank and engaging manner.

She told a story about Mr. Higgins and the inheritance that would have caused a dime-novelist to blush with shame, at his own comparatively unimaginative qualifications to deal in deft and thrilling fiction.

“In view of the fact that the jewels have already been identified by her ladyship, you will pardon me if I question the verity of this exceedingly interesting narrative with which you have favored us,” remarked the magistrate wearily.

Old Sweetheart began another tale—quite as ingenious. She allowed her facile fancy to play blithely in a fairy-land of fiction.

“You will pardon me,” said the magistrate again with exceeding irony, “if I interrupt to remark you transport me back to other days.”

“’ow?” said Old Sweetheart.

"The days of the *Arabian Nights*! I am become the wondering caliph of 'Elf Leyleh' and you the arch and winning weaver of marvelous tales."

This was a "settler" for Old Sweetheart. She didn't know what a caliph was and she had never heard of the One Thousand and One Nights.

"Take her away," said the magistrate. "Remove the fair enchantress!"

"Tyke me away, is it?" said Old Sweetheart. "You can be tyking, but before I goes, I 'as this to sye, and I want you all to 'ear it."

"Well?"

"I ayn't yet 'ad my morning tot!"

Her ladyship had received a message which caused her some concern. There was not much in it; indeed, it was rather terse and mysterious. But it was from the American she had seen on her visit to the police-station. Just what there had been on that occasion, which had attracted her to him, her ladyship could not define. Was it a hidden meaning in his eyes—a steady, appealing something that carried with it the converse of a menace? In view of all the circumstances, the prisoner's attitude was rather extraordinary. Perhaps, with sorrow comes an enhanced psychic sense. At any

rate, before that last crowning misfortune had, as it were, blurred and stupefied all acuteness of perception, her ladyship had professed to herself an odd and inexplicable interest in the American whose face and expression, intuition told her, so ill-fitted the crime of which he was accused, and of which there seemed no doubt of his guilt. As a person in a dream, her ladyship mechanically complied with the prisoner's request.

"I took the liberty of asking your ladyship to call upon me here, because I could not very well call upon your ladyship at her home," said the American, at the welcome sight of her.

Her ladyship, a distracted pale ghost of herself, leaned upon the sustaining arm of Sir George. Near by, in a little anteroom, was a watchful police-attendant.

"I advised her ladyship to pay no attention to your impudent request," said Sir George harshly, "and it is against my advice she has come here. What you have to say should be for the ears of the proper authorities alone."

"You mean her ladyship should not contaminate herself by acceding to my request?" laughed the American. "I thank her ladyship for her condescension." But though he spoke lightly, there

was obvious sympathy in his glance as it rested on the pale lady. Again in her presence, he seemed to forget his own trouble in sedulousness for her.

"What have you to say?" She spoke in a low voice.

"Madame, before I say anything, may I presume to ask if this gentleman is—your husband?"

"Of all the d— impudence!" blurted out Sir George.

But the lady who seemed dazed—too dazed to take offense—deigned to reply. "He is not," she said, "though—" She paused.

The American brightened. He interpreted that "though" correctly, however. Sir George expected some day to hold that tender relationship—perhaps, in the very near future, to judge by his proprietary manner. The lady seemed quite spiritless, for the time. But she was rarely beautiful, though she held her head less haughtily and there were shadows beneath her eyes. Those eyes had lost their fire and now seemed unusually large, sad and spiritual. The American liked her ladyship's eyes. His own look, he strove to make reassuring.

"Whatever you have to say, say it quickly," said Sir George brusquely. "Her ladyship has little time to waste on a common criminal."

"Oh, I'm not a plain ordinary criminal," laughed the American. "Ask the magistrate! I think he's a little at a loss what to do with me."

"I've heard the story," said Sir George. "Bally lot of rot, I call it! Claims he was a soldier—casualty list—officially dead!—came to life!—and a lot of other rubbish!"

Her ladyship laid a hand against her heart. Her face was slightly paler.

"Common swindler, that's what he is!" said Sir George. "Out with what you've to say, my man!"

"Since you do not bear a closer relationship to her ladyship—*yet*—what I have to say is for her ladyship's ears alone," said the American, with a smile.

Sir George said what he thought of the prisoner and his proposition. He seemed quite put out that her ladyship could even consider entertaining it, and was for their both going, at once! But her ladyship, for all her spiritless manner and air of abstraction, showed she still had a mind of her own. Sir George might dominate about so far—beyond that, her ladyship thought and acted for herself. The matter was arranged, and Sir George reluctantly betook himself into an adjoining room,

while her ladyship was left alone with the prisoner, with a guard, at a respectful distance, keeping a close eye on the criminal.

When her ladyship emerged, some time later, after her interview with the American, Sir George noticed her manner was changed, and that there was a strange light in her eyes, and a slight flush on her face. She seemed to tremble slightly, too.

"No; I will go alone," she said to the nobleman, at the door of her car. "I want to think—No; I insist!" Her tone rang peremptorily and Sir George was too wise not to let her have her own way.

The car moved away, Sir George watching it disappear discontentedly. The devil take a capricious and procrastinating woman! he thought. And now there was more delay, and mystery—What the deuce! Sir George hated mysteries. He didn't believe in truces, or delays, or compromising. When you deal with a gang of thieves, or blackmailers, "go at them!" Give them the limit of the law! Don't pamper them with private interviews. What the devil had the fellow to say?

Sir George who had expected to make her ladyship his bride at about the time of these recent un-

fortunate occurrences, and who had conspired so long and patiently to this end, like a big spider at its web, experienced now a violent revulsion of anger and dissatisfaction. Her ladyship's conduct left much to be desired. He would have to rule her, and her immense possessions, with an iron hand. Dominion—that was what she needed, and he—Sir George—swore rather violently, to himself, he would endeavor to furnish it! At the same time, he experienced a rather vague sense of apprehension. What had the nurse meant, by that talk about ghosts?—And Joggins, too?—Sir George had, subsequently, endeavored to pump Joggins further in the matter, but Joggins had shut up like a clam.

“A bit of nonsense, sir!” Joggins had answered evasively. Joggins didn't wish to be considered a soft-headed old fool.

And Sir George rather uneasily wondered if Joggins was lying? It occurred to Sir George he would visit a certain lady—not her ladyship!

CHAPTER XV

THERE is a little street in Camden Town that has a distinctive character of its own, differing from those other thoroughfares of the eminently respectable middle-class whose houses are as alike as one pea resembles another. After contemplating these other monotonous streets of the neighborhood, with their dreary sameness of house fronts, and wondering if the inhabitants were all of a pattern like the external appearance of their domiciles, it is with a feeling of relief you find yourself unexpectedly turning into Cobra Row, not far from Regents' Park and the canal. If the little thoroughfare isn't quite as winding and twisting as the name implies, it has, at least, a very charming curvature, while its houses, set back discreetly behind fence or wall, give it an air of mystery justified by tradition. Here artists, actors and bohemians have lived for many generations, and here one does not inquire about, or profess interest in, his or her neighbor. People come and go; no one is curious; no one cares! It is a little community

of its own, where the unorthodox may thrive without questions being asked, and into which Dame Gossip disdains, ordinarily, to enter.

It was into this discreet and interesting winding-way Sir George found himself turning that night. As his car drew near a certain quiet little house, some one came out of that house, got into a cab, and drove away. Sir George gazed for a moment curiously after this cab, then got out of his car and rang a door-bell. The gate opened and he went in. It was dark in the garden, but Sir George managed to find the front door which was partly ajar, and which opened at his approach. A lady who had once been young, greeted him.

"Well, if it isn't old Mustard-Pot!" she said.

Sir George frowned. He didn't exactly like this pet name; still he did not think it best just then openly to show his displeasure.

"Come on in," said the lady vivaciously. "And isn't it a month of Sundays since you have lent éclat to my humble abode by condescending to cross its threshold!"

"Who was that just left, Frizzie?" said Sir George thoughtfully.

The name Frizzie just fitted her. It suggested the peroxide hair, all out of order—the careless

garb, and a general air of irresponsibility. She was still pretty, in her way, though her cheeks were thin and had an unnatural flush. There was a strained smile about her lips, and her eyes were defiant as if not quite reconciled to saying good-by to a rapidly waning youth.

"Just left?" repeated Frizzie. "Oh, a gentleman caller—music-hall manager who wants me for a turn!"

He looked at her sharply. "Rather a benevolent-looking old party, for a manager of that kind, I should say! I only caught a glimpse of him, though!"

Frizzie looked at him sharply in turn. "What's on your mind?" she inquired succinctly. "I ain't supposin' you've called to pay tribute to my bewitching charms, or to be jealous of some old party what calls, strictly on business bent?"

Sir George shrugged; then seating himself in Frizzie's more or less cozy sitting-room, he stretched out his legs, and pondered.

"Take the sofa," said the lady sarcastically. "It's easier! I didn't know you'd come for a nap. Don't mind me!"

Sir George's eye fell upon a table, where

were pen and ink and other writing-material. "Been writing something?" he said carelessly.

Frizzie gave a perceptible start; had Sir George been observing her, he would probably have noticed it, but his gaze now was moodily fixed upon vacancy.

"A bit of a contract," said Frizzie hastily. "A song-and-dance turn—twenty pun a week, not bad, by 'arf, is it? I tried hard to work him for guineas, but he wouldn't stand for it. Times is changing!" Frizzie sighed. What she meant was: Youth was waning; or, every dog, or star, has its day, and Frizzie's star had been descending rapidly. But a few years ago—before the war—and she had been in her zenith. Mad days! Fizzy days! Now it was mainly bitter-beer, and porter, mostly flat at that, and a smoked kipper, in lieu of the erstwhile sole with trimmings, or the succulent homard, with sauce à la something! Ah, that mad publicity campaign, she had once planned, just before she had begun to slide downward! If only that had not gone glimmering! But why repine? A sly look crept around the corners of her thin lips.

"Frizzie," said Sir George, "I've come to speak to you about his lordship."

Her look at once became slyer, and, incidentally, harder. So a cat might have looked at a nice, fat canary bird.

"What about him?" said Frizzie guardedly. At the same time, a faint mysterious smile swept her lips.

"Do you believe in ghosts, Frizzie?"

"Which?"

"Ghosts? His lordship's ghost, for example!"

She bent forward. "Say, what ye drivin' at, old Mustard-Pot?" she demanded.

"Joggins, who is her ladyship's butler, saw what he claimed was his lordship's ghost."

"You ain't tellin' me!"

"At least, I have gathered that much. He let it out to one of the servants, but when I started to question him, he became confoundedly reticent. But you haven't answered my question?"

"I have heard of them who was supposed to be dead who have actually come back," said Frizzie slowly. "As for ghosts, I don't know whether I believe in them or not. I ain't never seen one myself, but that ain't saying others mightn't have. There's this to be said against there being male ghosts that come back: Men being a drinking, carousing, bad lot, generally, wouldn't be apt to

return to a sphere, when they couldn't indulge themselves. Horrible aggravation, I should call it, coming back as a ghost! Lickin' their ghostly chops for pleasures they couldn't have! No innards, to eat, drink and be merry with!" Frizzie shivered. "Take it from me, male ghosts what hasn't any flesh, ain't coming back to gaze upon the aggravation of the flesh-pots. They'd keep up higher, and play on harps and things!"

"Humph!" said Sir George.

"Female ghosts, being more sensitive and higher bred, might return and drift around," said Frizzie. "They *might* be able to stand it!"

"As you say," said Sir George, overlooking this complacent bit of feminine philosophy, "those who have been supposed to be dead, and so reported, have returned in the flesh. The point is, has his lordship returned in the flesh?"

"And pretending to be a ghost, to haunt his own house?" said Frizzie, with alacrity, scenting a dramatic situation. "To hide and watch! What a play it would make!"

"You forget your own little part," said Sir George darkly. He didn't like this rather frivolous mood of the lady; in fact, he didn't quite understand Frizzie, at this particular moment. "Some one

robbed the house, and then, some one carried off the child."

"Robbed himself, do you mean? And eloped with his own kid? What a situation!" said Frizzie enthusiastically.

"I don't say so," said Sir George. "The whole affair is wrapped in more or less mystery."

"If he robbed himself, it wouldn't be robbery, would it? And if he was caught, they couldn't arrest him. My own opinion is, he's hiding in a closet."

"What!" said Sir George, more disgusted than ever with Frizzie's light and oddly careless mood, under all the circumstances.

"Hiding in a closet, in the big attic of the great house!" said Frizzie, allowing her theatrical talents scope. "A great, big gloomy attic, where ghosts would hide, and where he could come out from, at nights, or day-times, too, to watch her!" Sir George did not answer. There wasn't much use paying any attention to Frizzie, at the moment. Let her alone, and the mood would presently evaporate! Sir George meditated, while Frizzie went on to develop her idea.

"He would watch until he had become master of all her secrets. He would have her in his power."

Frizzie was becoming melodramatic. "He would catch her, and the other, together, and then there would be a scene. Such a scene!" Frizzie clasped her hands. Sir George looked weary of life.

"I must get hold of Tommy Taddles, and get him to write it. Sometime, when Tommy is full of booze!—he writes beautifully, then."

So she rattled on, half-hysterically, half in earnest! Frizzie often talked most when she wanted to think most. Her cat-like brain worked best behind a vocal barrage. Presently she ran down and, curling up like a feline on the chair, studied Sir George with sharp calculating glance.

"It would make a difference, wouldn't it?—if there aren't male ghosts?"

"It would! Like setting the clock back!"

"What do you mean?" she asked, as if breathing in the whole personality of her visitor.

"Going back to where we were, I suppose!" said Sir George slowly.

Frizzie's lashes fell. She smiled, but said nothing. For some time, he talked to her and now Frizzie made a good listener. One would have said she hung breathlessly upon Sir George's words.

"And now," said Sir George, rising, "that's understood?"

"Yes; it's understood," said Frizzie, with a soft smile.

"You'll get enough notoriety to put you back on the top, with a bigger salary than ever. And as for the money—"

"I get promises to pay," said Frizzie, still smiling.

"You trust my word—" began Sir George loftily.

"Of course," said Frizzie brightly. "I'd as soon have your word, as the cash in hand!"

He glanced at her suspiciously, but her manner was vivacious and guileless; no one would have accused Frizzie of harboring any ulterior meanings, or disguising any subtleties, at that moment.

"You'll twinkle at the top again, my girl," he said.

"Right you are, old Mustard-Pot!" said she heartily.

"Why that?" he said, taking her hand at parting.

"Just a little name!" she laughed.

"Flattering?"

"Isn't mustard good?"

"It is. Is that the reason?"

"I'll write you," she laughed, "and tell you why

I've always called you that. Mustn't flatter you to your face, you know!"

And with seeming hilarious glee, Miss Frizzie pushed out Sir George and closed the door. Sir George stepped briskly toward his car; on the whole, he was as well satisfied as any one in his position could be, under all the circumstances. But generally speaking, he told himself he did detest ghosts.

"I think, though," he flattered himself, "I've put a spike in this ghost's coffin."

Had he been able to peep in, once more, upon Miss Frizzie, at that moment, he would not, perhaps, have felt so complacent. She indited hastily a few lines which she placed in an envelope; then she went into another room and started to pack a trunk.

CHAPTER XVI

"I'VE come back with the bones," said Jimmie, looking in the door of the room where his lordship lay. "Bones!—milk-bottle!—pills!" As he spoke he tossed the bones to yellow dog.

"I 'opes it chokes you. Oh, you want yours, too?" Ill-naturedly to the little hollerer. "Stop myking those sounds!"

Little hollerer had begun to gurgle with glee at sight of the milk-bottle and infant's food. "You'll gurgle all over your fyce, if you don't look hout. Oh, well, tyke it! Anythink for peace in a 'appy family! And 'ere's the pills for you!" With a half-attempt at bravado toward his lordship which wasn't altogether successful.

"I 'adn't intended to come back," went on Jimmie, "after the way I 'as been treated!—and thinkin' w'ot 'as 'appened, to 'er and 'im! But thinkin' of it"—pointing to yellow dog—"I 'as chynge'd my mind! W'ot? Leave yellow dog to starve? Not I! I loves dogs, and w'en I thought of yellow dog, pinin' away, I 'ad to come back."

His lordship did not answer. He was sleeping—breathing deeply—a queer smile on his face—a smile somewhat strained—

“Off his bloomin’ top again,” muttered Jimmie. “Ayn’t it lovely? A ‘owling canine”—yellow dog was very peacefully engaged at the ‘moment—“a gurgling goo-goo, and a bloomin’ hidiot! Not to mention w’ot may ‘ave ‘appened—w’ot ‘as ‘appened”—more pessimistically—“to Old Sweet-heart, and ‘im w’ot *was* my pal!”

Having fed the party, including a spoonful of medicine for his lordship, Jimmie folded his arms and contemplated the group, with deepest disapproval.

“I ayn’t sying I’d like to go back to the ‘ell-’ole,” he said musingly, “but I is sying there’s such a thing as out of the fryin’-pan into—a ‘otter plyce!”

As he spoke, his glance fell to the floor. What was that?—a bit of paper—which seemed to have fluttered from his lordship’s hand—a stubby lead-pencil beside it—Jimmie contemplated the paper with a bitter smile. He had a notion to let it lie there. What had his lordship been writing about? The circumstances were suspicious and boded no good. In fact, no good could come out of anything his lordship did. Jimmie was half-minded to pre-

tend not to see the paper—maybe it would blow out of the window, if he opened the door—

But while tempted not to do so, Jimmie picked it up—it was fate!—and read stumbingly. Unfortunately, he could read.

“I know you will come back,” ran the sprawling words.

“Oh, you did?” said Jimmie. Hadn’t he sworn, by all that was holy—and much that wasn’t—that he would never return? “Well, all I got to sye to you is”—addressing his oblivious lordship—“that if I did come back, it was on account of ’im!” pointing a forceful finger at yellow dog.

Having delivered which, Jimmie resumed his reading: “And having come back, I know you will be a proper pal.”

“Oh, you know that, do you?” sneered Jimmie. And having expressed himself some more, he read on:

“I may be *non compos*, when you do return—”

“What the ’ell’s that?” Sotto voce from Jimmie.

“In other words,” went on the note, “dotty in the crumpet! Indeed, there’s a bat, or two, flying around now.”

"Looks it, with that smile that won't come off!" thought Jimmie.

"Before they congregate too numerously—"

("To 'ell with his big words!" From Jimmie.)

"—and I lose, again, the blessed privilege of lucidity and rational thinking—"

("To 'ell—")

"—I implore you to return the little hollerer to the place from whence he came."

Then followed an address.

"Do this for me," urged his lordship more simply. "God bless—"

That was all!

Jimmie exploded. Of all the—the—the—etc. He made such a noise that yellow dog thought he was trying to have fun, and yellow dog began to make a noise, too. And the little hollerer joined the chorus! Jimmie stopped suddenly; and an awful silence pervaded the place. Yellow dog looked at Jimmie, expectantly. It was just as if he knew what it was all about. His little eyes shone with intelligence. He seemed to be asking Jimmie what he really was going to *do* about it, now that he had voluminously, and forcefully, and virilely proclaimed what he *wasn't* going to do?

Jimmie shook his fist at the heavens—dirty ceiling! He added an adamantine post-script to his avowed intentions, whereupon yellow dog began to wag his tail and it was plain to be seen he didn't place the slightest confidence in what Jimmie said he was going to do—or rather not do.

Having exhausted himself, as it were, Jimmie lapsed into a sullen coma. He didn't seem to care for anything, or anybody. After a bit, he began to walk up and down. He started to go out, and slam the door again, no doubt, but didn't. Then he began to shrug his shoulders—a gesture he had learned in sunny France. That helped some and seemed to relieve him. He also threw his hands about, a bit.

"Oh, well—" he said, finally, real vicious-like.

Yellow dog barked. There was something uncanny about his divination.

"Shut up," said Jimmie. Then—"Come on!" To Some Lung. "W'ot you wyting for?"

As he spoke, he sullenly dragged out the perambulator, and thereupon yellow dog almost tore himself to pieces.

"Oh, *you* don't go," said Jimmie in his most disagreeable tone. "I ayn't perambulating no blooming canine."

But Some Lung would have it otherwise. Some Lung showed he did not desire to depart without yellow dog. Indeed, Some Lung displayed such a lusty ability, to register that objection, that Jimmie closed his ears.

“Anythink—anythink, for peace!”

The heavens be praised Some Lung did not insist upon an accompanying procession of balloons!

Jimmie felt about as certain of what was going to happen to him, as a Christian martyr marching to his doom. Every block or so, he heaved a sigh or a groan. What he said or thought of his lordship, would not bear the chronicling. He kept his eyes open for bobbies and every time he saw one, he turned a corner. Thus his route became long and tortuous. He avoided, also, populous thoroughfares, quiet genteel byways being much more to his liking. As he approached the vicinity of the spacious mansion, Jimmie began to have the shivers.

He perambulated right up to the side entrance, however, rang the bell, and started to run away when a hand fell on his shoulder, and Jimmie looked up at a bobby—the biggest bobby, it seemed to him, he had ever seen.

"'ello!" said Jimmie, with an attempt at super-human blitheness and unconcern.

"Hello, my little man!" said the bobby.

"I ayn't *your* little man," said Jimmie lightly, "though I takes it friendly to 'ear you sye it!"

"Friendly, eh?" said the bobby, scrutinizing him closely. "Where were you going?"

"Away!" said Jimmie.

"How about *it*?" pointing to Some Lung.

"Oh," said Jimmie, with assumed carelessness, "I was just leaving it, you see. The blessed little hinfant 'as 'ad 'is little hairing, and now 'e's come 'ome, you see."

"Nursemaid, eh?" said the bobby, looking hard at Jimmie.

"Not professionally," said Jimmie, "You see, as 'ow the nursemaid was took ill, and there being on one else to wheel the little darlin', the missus she said to me, would I be a-minding of tyking 'im out, a turn or two, for the good of 'is 'ealth—"

"Ah, you're employed here, then?" said the bobby.

"Me? Who else? I'm 'er ladyship's footman. 'Tyke the little dear for a walk,' said she, know'n' the fondness I 'as for the little tots."

"Why did you start to run away?" Sternly.

"I?" Innocently.

At that moment, the servants' door opened, and the maid looked out. At sight of Some Lung, she gave a scream.

"If you don't mind, I 'as an engagement in the city," said Jimmie huskily, to the bobby.

"Not in the city, my little man," said the bobby. "If what I have in mind is true, your engagement is with me."

"You?" said Jimmie. He had known it all along—that it would come to this!

"Is this the infant, miss?"

"It's the perambulator—I'd recognize it among a hundred."

"It's the infant I'm asking about! Do you identify it?"

"Wait," she said. "How could any one identify it in that condition?" Indignantly. As she spoke, she wiped its face which Jimmie had neglected to wash. "It's him," she said. "Though his own mother wouldn't know for the smudges, hardly! I suppose he's been shamefully used."

"'e's 'ad a good time," said Jimmie. "A better time than I 'as!"

"Never mind, my little man," said the bobby.
"There's a good time yet, comin' to you! A good
long time, I might be adding!"

Jimmie, however, had no further spirit for
repartee, and at that moment, her ladyship's car
drove up in front.

CHAPTER XVII

THE bobby and Jimmie waited down in the servants' quarters until her ladyship should compose herself sufficiently, after the pleasant shock, to see them. Jimmie lingered dolefully; his late apprehension having been fully realized. It was just as he had expected; when it seemed as if his cup was filled to overflowing, another drop or two was added. First, he had been "done out of his back pay"; then, when the tide of fortune had changed and they had secured the wherewithal to enjoy the flesh-pots of the world, their happy, ghostly triumvirate had been rudely broken by the unexplained disappearance of the American; after that, Old Sweetheart had been weirdly whisked away like the vanishing lady in the conjurer's act; next, his lordship had retrograded, mentally, so that he was unable to look after himself, and heaven only knew what would become of him, without Jimmie as guardian-angel—and now lastly—cumulatively.—he, Jimmie, had been apprehended in a very serious crime and was in the hands of the law. That he was innocent, mattered little; had he

not been apprehended "with the goods"? And to explain away his guilt, would to be involve "his ludo-ship." No; there could be no explaining; Jimmie just had to take his medicine.

Jimmie tentatively eyed the bobby who had put Jimmie in a corner, and sat between him and the door. Once or twice Jimmie was tempted to make a wild dash for that door, but even as the thought flashed in his mind, the bobby seemed to interpret it and grinned maliciously.

"You'd like a chance to be mean, wouldn't you?" said Jimmie.

"Maybe I would," said the bobby, cracking his giant knuckles.

"I 'as a respect for the law," said Jimmie sullenly. "I wouldn't do anythink."

"I'm a mind-reader, my little man," said the other good-naturedly.

"Then you're reading in my mind 'ow I likes you," said Jimmie, gritting his teeth.

"You likes me so much we'll be Siamese-twins, before long," said the bobby, jingling a pair of handcuffs in his pocket. "We'll be fastened right together. Two hearts that beat as one!"

Jimmie's lip curled. "I 'ates familiarity," he said.

They continued thus, in amicable repartee, until the maid appeared.

"You are to come up," she said to Jimmie.

"Come along, my little man!" said the bobby.

"Her ladyship wishes to see him alone," spoke up the maid.

"A dangerous criminal, like him?" said the limb of the law.

"Her ladyship's orders!" said the maid haughtily.

The bobby hesitated, but titles went a long way with him. "Then her ladyship must take the responsibility. I will, however, be close by."

Jimmie walked out. He was as surprised as the bobby. What diabolical plot was on foot now? Maybe there were three or four bobbies, up-stairs, and they were going to surround him? Or a contingent of Tommies, looking for a "little man" who had availed himself of the partial benefits of a questionable insurance fund? Fraud—blackmail!—burglarizing!—kidnaping!—deserting! (Was not failing to come to life desertion?) These and sundry other charges would probably be laid at his door.

Jimmie went up-stairs reluctantly and was shown into a wonderful room. The ceiling was

about twice too high, and the chandelier full of funny glass things. In the center of the room was a marvelous cradle—pink and white and billowy! In the center of the cradle was Some Lung, all “rigged out.” He, too, looked all pink and white, having no doubt been newly scrubbed. Jimmie hardly recognized him. In the cradle, also, was yellow dog. He was now real yellow, having, too, had *his* “bawth,” with Joggins officiating. Of late, yellow dog, like Some Lung, had been of somewhat non-descript hue, but vigorous ablutions, in the case of each, had brought to light the real tints nature had intended.

Some Lung didn’t look quite as happy as he had been. Indeed, his countenance wore rather a sullen expression, as though he missed the free and easy atmosphere of his late environment—Old Sweetheart, his lordship, the balloons!—a glorious tout ensemble! Yellow dog, however, had dropped into the lap of luxury with easy adaptability, lolling amid fine laces with perfect unconcern for the grandeur of his new-found surroundings.

At the sight of Jimmie, yellow dog barked vociferously, but Some Lung only looked more sullen, as if to say: “It isn’t *you* I want! Where’s the other guy who bought me balloons and things?”

"He seems to know you—the little dog, I mean," said a voice.

Then Jimmie became aware of a wonderful lady—so sad-looking, yet upon whose face was a species of new-found joy!—a joy that seemed half-afraid of itself, or to be trembling upon the brink of it knew not what!

"Yes," said Jimmie, regarding yellow dog. "Mybe'e thinks I 'as a bone."

Then this struck him as an incriminating remark, connecting him directly with Some Lung and yellow dog, and—the whole criminal transaction of the kidnaping.

"Perhaps he has a reason for thinking it," said the lady in a gentle tone, studying Jimmie with lustrous eyes, where sadness seemed to struggle with gladness, and for the moment, at least, to yield supremacy to the latter.

"No, indeed, ma'am!" said Jimmie hastily. He had been doing some quick thinking. Perhaps he could say he had found the perambulator in a park with a note fastened to it, containing an address? A most improbable story—Give him time, and he might think up a better one! The situation was awkward. Jimmie would have to do some wonderful camouflaging, if he hoped to clear himself.

"'e 'as no reason to be thinkin' that," added Jimmie, as if yellow dog had defamed his character. "Not if 'e would be himplyin' we are old pals, and 'e 'as been accustomed to 'avin' his bone regular, from me!"

Yellow dog barked more familiarly. It was as if he were giving Jimmie the lie, direct; as if he were saying, just as plainly: "'ello, old pal!"

Jimmie scowled. "You 'ush up!" he wanted to say to yellow dog. But that wouldn't do; so he only affected an air of unconcern.

"'e's just one of those dogs that tykes to any one, right hoff," he said. "You don't have to know 'im more than five minutes, but 'e'll be acting as if 'e's known you all 'is life."

Was this going rather too far, in repudiation? Jimmie wondered. Was he overdoing the camouflage?

The lady looked slightly surprised at the explanation. She was still studying Jimmie with rapt lustrous gaze—an enigmatic gaze that made Jimmie most uneasy.

"Wow! wow!" barked yellow dog familiarly. More of that "hello-stuff"! Some Lung had some sense; *he* turned his head from Jimmie, as if he disliked him. Jimmie began to approve of Some

Lung. The little cuss was a pal who could keep a stiff upper-lip, after all!

"Won't you tell me your name?" said the beautiful lady.

Jimmie flushed. His name? How could he? Wasn't he a daisy-pusher "sewed in his blanket"—"gone west"? Tell his name, after participating in the insurance-pot with Old Sweetheart? The lady might look like an angel, but to Jimmie she seemed more like a siren conspiring to his undoing.

"I should like very much to know your name?" she repeated.

Jimmie shifted; he had to answer. "'iggins!" he blurted. "'enary 'iggins!" At any rate, it *might* have been his name, he reflected. He had told a name that had been a kind of near-neighbor to his own name.

"I am very grateful to you, Mr. Higgins," said the lady.

Jimmie became shift-eyed. What was she trying to do? Vampire-ize him? Find out where he had come from? Gather in his pal?—involve Old Sweetheart? Was she spreading a net for what she conceived the whole gang of kidnapers? And after she had pumped Jimmie dry, and got all the information she desired, would she summon bobby

from below, with—"Officer, you may take your man, now!" And would Jimmie then do his half of the Siamese-twins act, to the lock-up—a very reluctant and doleful half? Jimmie moved restlessly. Yellow dog moved, too. In fact, yellow dog wriggled all over. "I could tell. I could tell!" his joyous antics fairly proclaimed.

"You see, I found the little dev—darling in the park," began Jimmie in a hoarse voice. "There was a note—"

"But why should you say that?" she interrupted, a gleam of surprise in the lustrous eyes.

"What's the use?" thought Jimmie, with a sinking heart. Still he had to protect his pals and Old Sweetheart.

"I know," she said in a soft gentle voice, but she did not tell Jimmie just what she knew. Indeed, she stopped and seemed gazing beyond Jimmie and Some Lung. Jimmie followed her look apprehensively, but he saw only a blank wall. He wouldn't have been surprised if he had seen a small squad of soldiers. Maybe they were in one of the adjoining rooms.

"So you got out," she said, a new glimmer in her look.

"Where?" stammered Jimmie.

"You—and your two 'pals,'" she said, with a strange thrilling smile.

Jimmie began to shake. "I think you 'ave me mixed up," he said hoarsely, "with—with some other 'iggins!"

Again that look of surprise. "Why should I have you mixed up?" With a ravishing smile. "Besides, do you not answer the description, perfectly?"

"Description?" thought Jimmie. That didn't sound reassuring. They'd have his finger-prints, next!

He certainly would have to make a dash for it—

"As soon as the magistrate has satisfied himself as to the verity of the story of your American 'pal' we are to drive there together," she said, with another smile.

Magistrate? Jimmie's legs began to shake.

"'e's in jail?" he said hoarsely.

"Temporarily! Only temporarily!"

Did that imply a worse fate, a bit later, wondered Jimmie?

"And the old girl—Old Sweetheart?"—muttered Jimmie thickly.

"Your mother, I suppose you mean?"

"I suppose so."

"Yes; she has been temporarily held," said the fair lady.

"Meanin' jail?" hoarsely from Jimmie.

"I fear I must say that is my meaning."

Jimmie gazed around wildly.

"But do not be apprehensive," went on the sweet—*too* sweet—voice. "All doubts will be dispelled—the mists cleared away—"

"W'ot the 'ell?" thought Jimmie. "Things must be pretty bad!" Maybe, they were going to hang Old Dearie. Jimmie didn't know just what was the extreme penalty for kidnaping, or his being involved in the crime? No doubt it was considered a very serious offense, and presumably the punishment fitted the crime.

"You see, the American could not remember the address, but he said he could go to the place. He's a comparative stranger in London, and doesn't know the names of the streets, very well. But he's sure he can find it and after the magistrate has finished with him, and satisfied himself he is telling the truth—which, I am sure, will be the case—the magistrate will call me up, and we are to go there!"

"Go there!" That meant they'd get his lordship, too! And then they'd have the whole quartet of criminals!—as they thought them! Nice,

wasn't it? thought Jimmie. And the beautiful lady, trying to play with him as a cat does with a mouse—all purring and sweetness!—and hiding her claws!

“You, of course, know the street and number?” said the lady.

Jimmie promptly gave a false address.

“Why should I wait?” said the lady, as if speaking to herself.

“W’ot next?” thought Jimmie.

“The law moves so slowly!” she murmured. “It may be hours before the magistrate thinks it proper to allow—” She paused. “Meanwhile?” A strained look came to her eyes. “Suffering—helpless, perhaps—” She arose impatiently. At the moment, there was something very imperious about her. Jimmie was bewildered; indeed he was more than that; he was completely befuddled. He felt as if he might be a little mentally weak—like his lordship.

“Come,” said her ladyship to Jimmie, and they went down-stairs.

“I will call the car, and we will be off at once,” she went on, in tones oddly excited and unnatural. Yellow dog came running down too and Jimmie aimed a furtive kick at him, which yellow dog

dodged gleefully. Jimmie began to make swift wild plans for the future. The lady had ordered the car; she was now at the front door. An obstacle intervened—the bobby!

"I beg your ladyship's pardon," he said firmly, "but where are you taking my prisoner?"

"We are going out together," said her ladyship.

His jaw fell, but he had a sense of what was due to the dignity of his position. "Begging your ladyship's pardon, but this man's conduct has been most suspicious. He leaves the carriage at the side door and starts to run away."

"Walk!" said Jimmie.

"Run, my little man!" said the bobby. "Which, taken in connection there has been a kidnaping-case, reported here, is a bit odd and confusin'. And his story didn't hold water! Told me he was your ladyship's footman, and that you had asked him to take the little dear out for a turn or two."

Her ladyship bit her lips. She was palpably annoyed at the bobby's persistence. "Under the circumstances, can I let him out of my sight?—I mean out of the house?" went on the bobby.

"Did he tell you he is my footman?" said her ladyship.

"He did."

"Well, he ~~is~~ my footman." Her ladyship made a mental reservation that Jimmie was her footman, from that moment, if he would have the position. Thus she salved her conscience. She was most anxious to go—and to meet with interference of this kind was most annoying.

Again the bobby's jaw fell.

"I 'ad laid aside the uniform for a little 'oliday," lied Jimmie blithely. Her ladyship had him beaten with the camouflage.

"This is very stupid," said her ladyship imperiously, addressing the man in uniform, and the latter fell back.

Her ladyship was born to command, and when she looked at the bobby like that, he felt simply forced to give way. "Very well," he said humbly. "My mistake, I suppose!" But he walked off, greatly puzzled.

"And now," said her ladyship, waiting impatiently at the front door. Would the car never come? That dilatory chauffeur! Could he not hurry? She had said: "As soon as possible!" and he was taking longer than usual. Her ladyship tapped the floor impatiently with her foot. "At last!"—Ah, at last!

She turned to look for Jimmie, to accompany

her, but no Jimmie was in sight. The little cockney had executed a strategical retreat. While her ladyship's thought had been centered on the car, Jimmie had not waited on the order of his going, but had retired, swiftly and undetected,—via the back door.

“Never mind!” said her ladyship. “Fortunately, he gave me the address.”

And consoled by this, she got into her car.

CHAPTER XVIII

BUT although Jimmie had vanished from her ladyship's sight, he had not been suffered to make his exit alone. At the end of the hall, he almost ran into Joggins and only managed to escape observation by hastily stepping behind a curtain. Fortunately, the good Joggins was old and near-sighted; also, his perceptions were not so keen as they had been, or he would have discovered a small snuffling object that seemed deeply interested in the curtain. Joggins passed on and Jimmie stole down the back stairs. There the little cockney was obliged once more to dodge, at sight of the maid—this time into the closet, into which a small object insinuated itself with Jimmie, and manifested its friendly intentions by the vigorous thumping of its tail. Jimmie thought the maid would notice the thumping, but she didn't, and passed out of the room somewhere, while Jimmie made a dive for the side door leading to the street. He got out and quickly, but not before a streak shot by him, and got out ahead of him. The little cockney immediately indulged in a quickstep, away from the

neighborhood, but all the while he was resentfully conscious of an all too friendly object, gamboling at his side, or cutting capers around him. Still he did not dare stop, or indulge his feelings, and it was not until he had gone several blocks, that finally he ventured to pause and looked down upon the offending object whose canine eyes were full of a spirit of fun and adventure.

"'ere, you turn aroun' and go 'ome," said Jimmie in tones of great exasperation, addressing yellow dog. "I don't want you, and I won't 'ave you."

But yellow dog only wagged his tail, at a discreet distance, while Jimmie swore. Nice, when you have beaten a strategical retreat, to have an unwelcome little yellow dog following you everywhere, to betray you! Jimmie threw a stray pebble at yellow dog, but yellow dog only dodged, sat on his haunches and licked his chops. He seemed to think Jimmie was only having a bit of fun with him, and quite entered into the pastime.

"Oh, well!" At least, Jimmie said something that rhymed with it, and disgustedly went on, followed by the indefatigable little trailer.

When he reached their temporary domicile, Jimmie found his lordship still in. His lordship was

lying on his back, looking very weak and staring at the ceiling.

"You got my note?" he said to Jimmie, with a twisted smile.

"W'ot you think? Hit"—meaning Some Lung—"not bein' 'ere!"

"I didn't know but what it had evaporated," said his lordship feebly. "Turned into thin air, you know—melted away!"

"You got to get your bloomin' brains back again," said Jimmie roughly.

"But it has been rather like a dream," said his lordship, "and I was wondering as you came in, and I found the little dodger gone, if it hadn't all been a dream!"

"Then 'wyking will be pain,'" quoted Jimmie from the old song. "We got to duck, and that ayn't no dream!"

"Why 'duck'?" said his lordship. "One place is as good as another."

"Because they 'ave locked up 'er—Old Sweet-heart—and 'im, and are coming 'ere for us. A bobby 'ad me, but I managed to escape. Gave 'em the wrong address which will give us a breathin'-spell!—but not for long! 'e has peached to the police, and is goin' to bring the blokes 'ere."

"He? Who? I say," said his lordship, "this is interesting!"

"That ayn't the word I should use! I 'as a lot to answer for—without 'avin' to answer for a lot"—regarding his lordship accusingly—"I shouldn't 'ave to answer for! Through bein' a proper pal, don't you know!" Bitterly.

"Dear me!" said his lordship. "So they're coming here, to incarcerate us all together! Does that include yellow dog? And where is he, by the by?"

"Waitin' out in front, to show 'em we are 'ere," said Jimmie more bitterly. "I invited 'im in, after 'is followin' me all the wye 'ome, and me tryin' to drive 'im back, but 'e refused the hinvitation! Afraid of w'ot 'e might get!"

"Couldn't drive him away!" mused his lordship. "Faithful animal! When we lose faith in human nature, Jimmie, we must always remember there are dogs."

"Faithful?" scoffed Jimmie. "It's my opinion 'e's actin' like a bloomin' sleuth. 'e's just sittin' out in front to tell 'em we're 'ere, and when they comes along, 'e'll start 'is bleedin' barking: 'ello, 'ere they are!' 'e'll sye!"

"Your diagnosis of the situation may be correct," said his lordship wearily, "still I think his

intentions are good. And after all, yellow dog may be no worse than many people who mean to do their best, but end by doing their worst!" As he spoke, his lordship closed his eyes.

"Wyke up!" said Jimmie indignantly.

"Why?" said his lordship. "Why not sleep?"

"Why?" sputtered Jimmie.

"Pray let me woo thee, gentle goddess," murmured his lordship.

"Off his bloomin' top, again!" groaned Jimmie.

"Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care, the death of each day's life, sore labour's bath."

"Off his bloomin'—"

"Balm of hurt minds; great nature's second course—"

"Now I know 'e's a' hidiot," said Jimmie with profound conviction. "No one but a' hidiot could talk like that."

His lordship chuckled. "Hist!" he said. "Do you not know those words are immortal? 'Balm of hurt minds,' " he repeated. "Do those words mean nothing to you, Jimmie?"

"If you mean 'barmy in the crumpey,' they does," said Jimmie.

"Ha! A new interpreter of the immortal bard!" ejaculated his lordship.

"'ere's a pill," said Jimmie hastily. "Now your 'ear me!" Commandingly.

"Very well!" Meekly.

"You gotta do w'ot I tell you. Do you 'ear?"

"I do. I will do what anybody tells me to!" Gently. "A little child could guide me."

"Huh!" snorted Jimmie. "I ayn't a little child, but I'll tell you w'ot's w'ot, all right!"

And he did, finding his lordship most amenable. The latter, after Jimmie's vigorous pronouncement of their predicament, started to poke his thin legs out of bed.

"It's bitter cold," he said.

"Aw, shut up!" said Jimmie. "They'll myke it bitter 'ot for us, before long!"

Her ladyship drove to the address Jimmie had given here. It had been rather an exclusive neighborhood, and her ladyship had not imagined it had retrograded to the boarding-house stage of Bloomsbury Square or many of the once fashionable streets in the vicinity of the museum. Therefore she was rather surprised when her car stopped at the door. A neat maid let her in, and her ladyship was, shortly after, met by a prim and precise spinster who, having listened to the purport of her ladyship's visit,

announced very primly and precisely, she had not yet converted her home into lodgings, and if she ever did descend to such a step, it would certainly not be lodgings for gentlemen!

But, her ladyship somewhat helplessly insisted, this was the address—there could be no mistake! In her disappointment, her ladyship hardly knew what she was saying. More grimly the prim and precise lady reiterated her former statement; in fact, she seemed deeply offended, not so much at the lodging-house idea, as that of a lodging-house for gentlemen! Indeed, the interview was reaching a painful stage, when her ladyship apologized contritely for the intrusion and retreated. She was conscious, however, of a door shutting somewhat sharply behind her, and had she looked around, she would have seen a primly becurled spinster-face, at the window, indignantly watching her car until it was well out of sight.

From this fictitious address her ladyship, harassed and worried, drove to the police-station where she was so fortunate as to be ushered at once into the presence of the magistrate just after the adjournment of court. Also, she was fortunate to find him in one of his best moods; the new act was working beautifully! There are occasions when

a paucity of evidence and a superabundance of intuition, on the part of the court, work to perfection together, and the magistrate was convinced these occasions had recently arisen, giving him the opportunity to display that sound sense which, after all, is the basis of all law. Certainly, pettifogging and quibbling were precluded under the new act, and sometimes judicial intuition is better than evidence, anyhow! Evidence may lie, but intuition? Ah! The magistrate was just inwardly congratulating himself, when her ladyship was announced.

"So your ladyship requests the release of the prisoner?" said the magistrate, after greeting her ladyship and listening to what she had to say.

"Why should he not be released?" said her ladyship with feverish accents. "Is he not innocent? Besides, I need his assistance. I have already been on a fool's errand, to a wrong address—I can not imagine why! But no matter about that! This—this gentleman, I believe, can help me."

"A strange affair!" ruminated the magistrate, as the American was brought in. "So you're neither a thief nor a rogue?" he said, addressing the prisoner.

"I have already assured you of the fact," said the American.

"Most prisoners do," said the other. "But before releasing this—this gentleman, I must know more about him. Who are you?"

"A ghost who—"

"That little comedy is played out," observed the magistrate with acerbity. "I repeat the question."

"I am an American."

"An adventurer?"

"I acknowledge I enlisted under a name not my own."

"Why?"

"Is it necessary to tell, in order to be released of a crime of which her ladyship assures you I am perfectly innocent?"

"It is. 'Gentlemen' who travel under aliases—whether further disguised as ghosts or not—can be held at the discretion of the court."

"Under the special act, I suppose?" said the American. "Well, as I have to tell, in order to get out, and as I can't help her ladyship unless I get out, here goes!" he laughed. "Not much to tell! Son of an American millionaire!—college, dissipation, debts!—wine, woman, song! Young fool—stern dad! Twice, thrice forgiven—more of the white-light stuff! I. O. U.'s?—Whew! Father granite-sort of old governor—self-made! grand

type! Devil of a scene! Disgraced the family name, and all that! Pity 'tis, 'tis true! Unrepentant young fool; defied stern governor! Kicked out—figuratively! Young fool took another name—cattle-ship!—here! Enlisted—over the top!—reported dead!—wasn't—That's all!"

"Bless my soul! He talks like a character from Pickwick," said the magistrate. "Your name?"

The American gave it.

"Not the son of the rubber-magnate?" said the magistrate, looking impressed.

"The same!" Carelessly.

"Why were you found in her ladyship's house, that day?"

"I came to investigate—amateur detective stunt, you know," he laughed.

"For whom were you 'investigating'?"

"Oh, I was quite an independent detective agency," said the other in the same tone. "No one hired me. I was merely acting as a friend of his lordship." Her ladyship's breast arose, but she said nothing.

"His lordship knew?"

"He did not."

"You were acquainted with his lordship's real

identity, then, although he sought to withhold the same from common knowledge?"

"I suspected who he was. You see I once nurs—looked after his lordship in a prison-camp, and his lordship, who was out of his head part of the time, talked a bit about himself, and"—he did not look at her ladyship—"matters most dear to him. I inquired where his lordship's town house was, and found it, and then, the bobbies found me."

"His lordship was not killed, as reported?"

"Her ladyship has surmised as much. Of course, I could not actually betray a pal!" With a laugh.

"Humph!" said the magistrate. "I think you're acting, my young friend"—severely—"the part of friend, philosopher and guide!"

"You honor me!"

"It's a dangerous business! I suppose I'll have to let you go."

"Thanks!"

"Don't thank me." Dryly. "I'm glad to get rid of you. Officialdom is responsible for a great deal, but when it creates an official ghost, it gives birth to a profound magisterial embarrassment. When I release you, I take leave of you gratefully."

"You mean," said the American, with a smile,

"you mean you are glad of the opportunity to kick me out?"

"Exactly; although I shouldn't clothe the magisterial wish in language so undignified. I can find no crime to fasten on to you, and if I can't find a crime to fasten on to a prisoner who has no official existence, why in heaven's name shouldn't I be rid of him?"

"Oh, do," said her ladyship, "and quickly!"

"It is done!" said the magistrate, rising.

"He is coming with me," said her ladyship. "My car is without."

"Good! Take him! I wish you joy of him! And while you are about it, there is another prisoner—the old woman. You are quite welcome to her; I throw her in, as good measure—"

"Jimmie's mother!" said her ladyship. "I'll take her, of course."

"If there's nothing against him"—pointing to the American—"there's nothing against her," said the magistrate, "although she doesn't set up a claim of non-existence! Indeed, she's very much alive, and, at last accounts, was calling loudly for a 'tot'!"

Her ladyship laughed nervously. She was anxious to be gone. "Perhaps, I can induce her to sign a pledge," she said hastily.

"I'm sure she'll *sign* anything," said the magistrate, "but as for keeping—"

"One can hope for the best," said her ladyship, stepping rather quickly toward the door.

The magistrate insisted upon opening it for her. "Good day, your ladyship! Good day, my young friend!" As he spoke, he fumbled in his pocket, and drew out a long cigar which he handed to the late prisoner. "Smoke it later! I think I owe you something."

"Much obliged!" laughed the American, looking at the weed. "English justice isn't so bad."

"Eh?—What?" spluttered the magistrate, but they had both walked out quickly.

They found Sir George without, waiting at the door of her ladyship's car and looking rather dissatisfied. Truth to tell, matters were not progressing between her ladyship and Sir George as the latter desired. He had, of late, found her ladyship absent-minded, capricious and illusive. When he told himself he would yet grasp her in his strong hands, he found her more and more difficult to reach—to touch—to move. She seemed ever escaping him; it was as if she receded to his every advance—unconsciously, intuitively, perhaps. He experienced the annoying sensation that, when he

was speaking, she sometimes hardly heard what he was saying. This not only offended his vanity and pride, but brought with it an accompanying uncertainty. Now, Sir George disliked and resented that uncertainty exceedingly, especially as he had been patient so long. It was difficult not to manifest in unmistakable fashion, signs of that impatience, yet ever he was forced to wait.

He was in this secretly resentful—not to say angry—mood, when, calling at her house, a short time before, he was informed by Joggins her ladyship was out. Divining she might have gone to the police-station on some errand connected with recent mysterious occurrences, Sir George himself repaired thither. Recognizing her car and chauffeur in front of the place, Sir George was debating with himself whether to go in after her ladyship or to wait for her, without, when the door of the police-station opened and she whom he sought appeared on the front steps. Sir George's first expression of pleasure was followed by one quite different, when he noticed she was followed by that presumable "miscreant and arch-criminal," the American. As the two came down to the car, Sir George eyed the American with ill-concealed sourness and surprise.

"What you doing?" he began.

"Discharged!" laughed the American. "By the way, why haven't you enlisted?"

"Sir George holds a high political position," said her ladyship absently.

"Oh!" said the American in tones that meant volumes.

"Do you mean to cast any aspersions on my honor?" said Sir George angrily.

"What about *my* honor?" laughed the American. "The last time we met, you called me a hardened criminal, if I remember rightly!" He looked the other up and down. "Now, if I were to say what I thought about you—" He paused suddenly, and looked at her ladyship. "Nearly forgot myself! Beg pardon! Suppose we raise the flag of truce, and call it fifty-fifty?"

Sir George raised an eyebrow, instead. Weren't the jewels stolen, and wasn't some of the loot found on this fellow, and yet here he was—discharged! Sir George wondered, but her ladyship did not explain, then; she was thinking of other matters, quite to the exclusion of what Sir George might think, or desire to find out. At that moment, Old Sweetheart came out and approached. Her face was pathetic.

"I sye, they 'asn't any manners!" she announced. " 'Hout you go! they sye 'I'll not stir a step

without my little tot!" says I. "I'll stye here till doomsday, first!" And w'ot 'appened? Arter bein' hincarcerated hinnocently, for ages, in their 'orrid jail, does they 'and me a little tot, with a God bless you? They does not! They 'asn't no 'eart, the government 'asn't! After tyking my Jimmie and myking a corpse of 'im! 'im, the only support of my declining days!"

"You forget he isn't dead," said her ladyship, "and I should have brought him with me if he hadn't run away—though why, I can not imagine! Or why he should have given me the wrong address! But never mind about that now. Get in, if you care to!"

"Is *she* going with you?" asked Sir George, who was much mystified by these words.

"Of course!"

"I fear there is no room for me," he observed stiffly. "I was just passing, saw your car and stopped."

"I won't 'urt the gentleman," said Old Sweetheart.

Sir George looked at her disagreeably. Things were happening and he felt rather "out of it."

"I think," he said to her ladyship, "you are going on another wild-goose chase, whatever your purpose, if you are entrusting yourself to him!"

"I think you're a bad prophet," said the American.

"Remember, I disapprove of the whole proceeding," remarked Sir George stiffly, overlooking the American.

"He means, he thinks I am stringing your ladyship—"

Sir George bowed stiffly, but her ladyship did not seem to notice. Old Sweetheart got in. She even forgot about her little tot, for the moment. "If 'er could only see me now," she said wistfully.

"Her?" said the American.

"'er w'ot 'ad the himitation diamonds, and kept liftin' her hand to the himitation curls!"

"You show him the way," said her ladyship to the American, and her eyes were very bright.

The American found a seat for himself next to the driver. As they proceeded, Old Sweetheart kept poking her head out of the window that people might see her, and was greatly disappointed they did not pass the disreputable pub in the disreputable neighborhood. Had they done so, she would have called out. Meanwhile, her ladyship leaned back, with eyes half-closed until the car came to a sudden stop.

CHAPTER XIX

“**A**RE we down-hearted?” said his lordship feebly.

Jimmie did not answer. *He* was. Even yellow dog did not seem up to the mark.

“I seem a bit done up,” said his lordship.

They had reached their old stamping-ground—Leicester Square; but in order to reach it, his lordship had leaned hard on Jimmie’s arm and shoulder. Now he sank down as if he didn’t want ever to get up again.

“*Are* we down-hearted?” he peeped again feebly, while yellow dog licked his hand sympathetically.

“Shut up!” said Jimmie. You got to speak rough to people, and idiots, sometimes.

On the way to this destination which Jimmie had selected for want of a better, the little cockney had endeavored to relate some of the adventures that had befallen him, but his lordship’s brain was in such shape, and Jimmie’s narrative was so confused, that his lordship failed to make anything of *the matter*. There was a bobby, and a search, and

a hue-and-a-cry, with a dash of yellow dog, and a flavor of Old Sweetheart and lost pal mixed in the narrative that would have made it rather confusing to a brain far more rational than his lordship's poor addled pate. 'An old wound in his lordship's thigh which had spells of bothering him, now intruded itself with sundry ominous throbbings.

"*Are* we?" he began to peep once more, and then suddenly went limp.

"'ere's a little bit more of the syme, only a bit worse," said Jimmie. Yellow dog began to whimper now; then he howled softly.

"'ere, don't do that," said Jimmie, alarmed. He knew dogs howl on occasions most ominous for their masters. "Shut hup, you little beast!"

"Is the poor gentleman ill?" said a shabby woman, with a basket.

"Just pretendin'," said Jimmie, "and arter we're goin' to tyke hup a collection. Ayn't he doin' it most natural-like?"

"How can you speak like that?" said the woman indignantly. "You're a brute!"

"Of course," said Jimmie bitterly. "Mybe I 'ave 'ad that 'appen to me which mykes me a brute." His eye lighted on a distant bobby—one of Jimmie's mortal enemies! Oh, bitter moment!

"'ere, you 'old his head," said Jimmie to the woman, "to keep 'im from sliding off the bench, and I'll go for 'elp." And he went to the bobby.

To him—even him!—Jimmie explained.

"No 'ome to send 'im to?" said the bobby.

"'e 'asn't a plyce to lay his 'ead," said Jimmie. "'im that 'as fought for 'is king and country!" Forgetfully.

"That's all right," said the bobby cheerily. "We'll have him in the horspital, and they'll patch him up."

Jimmie assented, for what else could he do? The woman had stretched his lordship out on the bench. She was big, buxom and hearty—Covent Garden written all over her. Jimmie stood gloomily now in front of the bench while bobby hustled for the ambulance and yellow dog crouched near his lordship's head. Soon the ambulance arrived and they put his lordship in it. The ambulance moved swiftly away and yellow dog scooted for dear life after it.

Jimmie followed more leisurely. He wanted to take to his heels, but he wouldn't desert his lordship. The thought *did* cross his mind that he might as well take to his heels now that he could do nothing more for his lordship, but the sight of

yellow dog scooting, as for dear life, after the ambulance, shamed the brief temptation. Willy-nilly, his (Jimmie's) fate was intertwined with his lordship's. He hoped he would be permitted to attend his lordship's funeral, before being incarcerated for fraudulent use of insurance money, and a few other heinous offenses. The only ray of hope he had was that the government might give him his back pay, and then he could pay back the insurance money, and get off, perhaps, with only ten years or so.

At the hospital, Jimmie submitted to a soul-rending interview in the outer office, while his lordship was being looked after somewhere else. Jimmie gave a lot of fictitious facts about his lordship's military experiences. He didn't quite know why he did, except his lordship had expressed the strong desire to remain defunct or incognito. Also, Jimmie had got into the reprehensible habit of not telling the truth—a propensity he had inherited perhaps, from Old Sweetheart, a weird weaver of romances, especially when the little "tots" were exercising a benign influence upon her poetic imagination. Jimmie didn't need the little "tots" to stimulate his imagination; circumstances were sufficiently unusual to stimulate even the most sluggish fancy. He launched into fictitious military engage-

ments and imaginary encounters, becoming quite Homeric—anything to disguise the real truth—so that he would not be discovered, as well as his lordship.

“What did you say his name was?” asked the questioner grimly, obviously suspicious of Jimmie!

Jimmie thought desperately. Then he swallowed.

“’iggins,” he said desperately. It was the first name he could think of. “’enary ’iggins!”

The questioner made a note. Jimmie began to move away weakly. “There’s a little yellow dog,” he said. “I’d like to see it ’ave its bone, hoccasionally.”

“It will not be suffered to starve.”

“Mybe you’ll let ’im sit by ’im, sometime?”

“Maybe!”

“In cyse I shouldn’t be able to come around!” Jimmie meant in case he should be cast in durance vile. “’e might be lonesome.”

“I understand,” said the attendant. Indeed, a bashed-in Tommy and his dog often make fine pals. “I imagine it can be arranged.”

“I should like somebody with ’im, in cyse—”

“It may not be as bad as that!”

"A little yellow dog's better than nobody," said Jimmie. "And 'e 'as took to 'im, real pal-like! I'd tyke it kindly if 'e could stye with 'im, in cyse of 'im going west! A female nurse 'as 'er plyce, but I 'ave 'eard a Tommy sye there's nothink like a dog gazing in your heyes, or a pal 'oldin' your 'and, when you're goin' west."

"Why shouldn't you be here, in that event, which may be more remote than you seem to anticipate?"

"I mightn't be"—Jimmie was about to say "allowed." He changed it to: "I 'ave very important business!" Hoarsely.

"By the way, what's your name?" said the attendant curiously.

"'iggins," said Jimmie thoughtlessly. Then could have bit out his tongue.

"Why, that's the name—"

"We're—we're related," said Jimmie desperately. "Second cousins, or somethink like that!"

"I see," the attendant replied, as Jimmie thought with suspicion.

"That's why I was that hanxious about yellow dog being with 'im, in cyse—" Jimmie went on.

Then walked away!

The attendant looked after him. "Something strange here!" he thought. "I wonder what?"

As Jimmie moved away, he felt indeed alone. And alone with a very bad conscience! What a world! He felt as if he were wading through bucketsful of woe, when suddenly, he saw a sight that nearly froze him to the spot. Old Sweetheart—in a limousine—a real limousine—that had a chauffeur in uniform! Jimmie nearly fell dead. The sight was almost too much for him. Old Sweetheart was very much alive, and riding in a limousine, if you please! Of course, it was a delusion; it could not be. Jimmie told himself he could only be imagining he saw it.

"It's I who ham the hidiot now," he said to himself. "It ayn't the bobbies w'ot'll get me. It's the lunatic-man. And I'll wyke up, thinkin' I'm King Solomon."

He continued to gaze in the direction the limousine had gone; then he tapped his head significantly, and mournfully moved on.

Again her ladyship was doomed to disappointment. The American directed her to the erstwhile domicile of the phantom three, but when they

reached there, the bird had flown. There were the pill-boxes—a bone—a bottle, half-filled with milk—the balloons, fantastically bobbing against the ceiling, but no “his lordship!” What had become of him? The woman of the house did not know. The rent had been paid in advance. Perhaps the poor ailing gentleman would come back; he was in no condition to go wandering about alone. Her ladyship leaned against the wall and stared into space. For days he had lain there and babbled like a child, the woman went on; he certainly had no business to get up, and go out. Her ladyship now said nothing. Was she reconstructing the scenes enacted in that shabby apartment?—his lordship lying “babbling there”—the balloons, overhead—Some Lung, where? Her hands closed tightly and she breathed deeply. The woman, sensing a tragedy perhaps, asked if she wanted to wait?

Her ladyship started—slowly shook her head. It may be she divined that nothing would come of waiting there, now. But she left with the wondering woman her card and a request to be informed if the ailing gentleman did return. Then her ladyship went away, but at the head of the dingy stairs she looked back, and her eyes were misty. Accom-

panied by the American, she got into her car and leaned back. Her fingers moved restlessly; there was a spot of color on her cheeks.

"At any rate, your ladyship doesn't think I've been 'stringing' her," remarked the young man sympathetically.

"No, no!" she murmured. Then—"Where now?" The car still waited. She tapped with restless foot on the floor. "The family attorney—I can think of nothing better," she said absently, and gave an address.

They first set Old Sweetheart down, however, in the near vicinity of the disreputable pub, in the disreputable neighborhood. This at Old Sweetheart's request! Her ladyship postponed her plans for the regeneration of Old Sweetheart, and her moral rebirth into a plane of respectable sobriety. But she thrust into her hand a five-pound note. That Old Sweetheart did not expend it in a manner that would have been approved by her ladyship goes without saying. In fact, Old Sweetheart hastily hied her to an old and familiar destination. She made a triumphal entry into the disreputable little pub.

"So you've got out?" said miss, tossing her head.

"Got out!" exclaimed Old Sweetheart haughtily. "I 'as been visitin' 'igh relations! Lords and duchesses!"

"I thought you'd get six months, at least," said miss, with a slight air of disappointment.

"I 'as been ridin' in w'ot they calls a limousine," said Old Sweetheart. "And in cyse the likes of you don't know w'ot it is, tyke it from me they ayn't nothink else so grand. Mykes the king's chariot look like a fish-cart!" she chortled. "And me a-sittin' back with 'er ladyship!"

"More likely a' hofficer," said miss, "in the police van!"

Old Sweetheart breathed hard. Then tossed her head. "I sees you still 'as the himitation ring!"

Miss's eyes flamed. Old Sweetheart had touched a sore spot.

"What'll you 'ave?" she said ominously.

"I 'as seen 'em, peddled by a 'ebrew, from a tray, for a thr'pence!" said Old Sweetheart. "And some much 'andsomer for fourpence!"

"*What'll* you 'ave?" said miss with an accent.

"I'll 'ave a little tot, and I 'ope it's better than the last." With which Old Sweetheart tossed the five-pound note to the bar, with a manner as if it had been a six-penny bit.

CHAPTER XX

THE usual type of old family solicitor! A patient human receptacle of tales of woe, and a giver of advice, as often followed by the breach as in the observing, especially in the case of clients of impetuous or temperamental natures, such as her ladyship had been, and possibly was now! As her ladyship mounted the stairs to this estimable gentleman's sanctum of learning, whom should she encounter coming down but Joggins, the butler. The latter saw her ladyship first, and tried to get by unobserved. It was obvious Joggins was greatly embarrassed. But her ladyship's bright eyes defeated his purpose and forced him to linger, instead of hurrying down.

"Why, Joggins!" she exclaimed.

"A bit of legal business, your ladyship!" stammered Joggins.

"Legal business? You?"

Joggins reddened, her ladyship's eyes were so searching.

"Making my will, or something like that," stammered Joggins, "and I took the liberty of going to your ladyship's—"

"Solicitor for advice?" asked her ladyship.

"Yes; that is it," said Joggins, seeming anxious to hurry away.

Perhaps her ladyship wondered for a moment at Joggins' manner—but only for a moment. She, too, was anxious—disturbed, and her own private affairs claimed her attention.

"Yes, yes; quite so!" she said absently. "One does make a will sometimes, and I suppose you have saved a tidy bit."

"A bit," said Joggins, "thanking your ladyship!"

And her ladyship went on.

"Ah," said the solicitor, warmly greeting her ladyship, "I have just had a visit from the excellent Joggins."

"Yes; I met him. 'About a will, I believe!'"

"Hardly!" said the attorney. "About a ghost!"

"A ghost?" said her ladyship.

"At least, Joggins thought it was a ghost, at first."

"Does—does it concern me?" said her ladyship, her voice wavering slightly.

"Somewhat," he answered. "You see, Joggins saw it sitting by the cradle."

"The cradle!" exclaimed her ladyship, growing paler.

"As Joggins entered, it arose and glided by him. The spectacle was a little too much for Joggins who collapsed. When he recovered, he was rather unstrung. It seems nurse had been talking a good deal about shadows and spooks, and Joggins' nerves weren't quite up to the mark. Besides, he recognized the ghost, or its eyes—"

Her ladyship was trembling slightly. "Please tell me quickly," she said. "Of course, it was—?"

He nodded. "Then Joggins noted on the floor, a bit of dirt from some one's boot. And this lay right where the figure had passed. Joggins began to wonder. Ghosts do not leave trails of dirt from London streets, behind them. And Joggins began to ask himself when is a ghost not a ghost? In his perplexity, he was, at first, at a loss what to do. He thought of going to your ladyship, but hesitated, not wishing needlessly to shock your ladyship."

"He should have come to me! I know now he is alive—but where? Please go on—go on!"

"Nurse inclined to the ghost theory, and that helped to confuse Joggins still further. Nurse

claimed to have heard doors slam, windows open, and mysterious footsteps. It seems that nurse belongs to a little table-moving circle, and on one or two occasions, Joggins sat in. So Joggins kept his peace for a while, thinking nurse, or some one else, might have left the bit of dirt, and that its presence didn't altogether disprove the ghost theory. Also, I believe nurse claimed to have received mysterious table-rappings from some one, claiming to be his lordship, in spirit-land."

Her ladyship breathed harder.

"Pardon me, but I have to tell the whole story, to make everything clear," he went on more rapidly. "When the child was taken, Joggins became skeptical about ghosts once more, and for a day or two, he underwent another period of mental turmoil and uncertainty. He wanted to tell your ladyship, and still he hesitated to do so. He wanted to tell the police, and hesitated once more, thinking that if his lordship preferred to be thought dead, it was not his place (Joggins') to betray him to the police. You see, Joggins was very fond of his lordship."

Her ladyship bent her head.

"In his perplexity, Joggins finally came to me, and laid the whole matter before me. I agreed with him that it was well not to communicate all

the circumstances to the police, and so court a good deal of unpleasant notoriety, but to inaugurate, through more private sources, a thorough investigation and search. This we were about to start, and I was preparing to communicate with your ladyship in the matter, and endeavor to secure your approval, when the child was returned, a little dirtier, but apparently in good condition. And now you have all that in a nut-shell." He paused. "There may be a little talk, but very little notoriety. I think Joggins and I have saved your ladyship that."

He gazed at her now expectantly; there was that other matter—the more important matter to consider.

"He is living," said her ladyship, "but where?—and how?" She hardly controlled her tones which were tremulous. The solicitor noted and smiled.

"Yes, that fact seems fairly established, by this time—first, when he robbed himself—"

"A mere nothing out of the great abundance that was, and is, his! Oh, that foolish police-court business!" said her ladyship.

"We must have police courts, and I'm afraid, later, we must have a little dealing with the probate court, to undo—"

"He must have all his possessions back again, of course!" cried her ladyship.

"All?" said the attorney, and a faint flush mantled her ladyship's delicate cheek. "And that brings us to something else!"

"Something about him?" said her ladyship, with rising color.

"Yes!"

"If it is anything to his discredit, I will not listen to a word!"

"No?" He smiled. Had there been a time when her ladyship would have spoken otherwise? "You wish to find him?"

"He is ill—helpless, perhaps—in want, it may be, and"—with a sudden uplift of her head—"he has served his king and country!"

"Served honorably and bravely!" murmured the solicitor.

"Would I—could I, do less—for a stranger?" she demanded a little breathlessly. "Is this a time to quibble with one's self about one's own pitiable little affairs? Shall I show myself so small when the world is full of so much that is only large and noble?"

He rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "It may be your ladyship need not seek him on such exalted

grounds. You may find a very simple, and if less exalted, more human plane, upon which to meet."

But at the moment, these words meant nothing to her ladyship.

"Why do we waste time?" she said. "Is this a time for words?" Impetuously.

"It is not," said the lawyer, with an enigmatic smile. "What I had further to say may very well wait. After all, to find him, at once, is the first business of the moment. Come!"

And motioning her to precede him, the two, a few moments later, passed down the stairs.

CHAPTER XXI

JIMMIE continued to wander around in a daze. He had no special objective; he did not know where to go, or what to do. Even the festive music-hall, haunt for Harry and Harriette, had lost its charm for him. He walked mechanically to find himself, somewhat later, in the confusing byways of the congested district of his childhood. He was not aware that he had intended coming thither, but here he was. Having arrived in the disreputable neighborhood, subconsciously, as it were, Jimmie now consciously began to drift, by slow degrees, toward a certain disreputable pub which, presently, he entered. There whom should he find, as natural as ever, but Old Sweetheart, occupied after her customary fashion. At this definite and not-to-be-doubted sight of her, Jimmie emitted sundry sounds of joy.

“The larst time I thought I seen you, Old Darlin’, you was ridin’ in a limousine, and ’ad a chauffeur, in uniform a-drivin’ you. And the bobbies was makin’ wye for you, ’oldin’ up the com-

mon traffic, with the common 'erd!" Jimmie added a poetic touch, or two, to facts.

Old Sweetheart tossed her head. "And 'er doubtin' of it!" she said, pointing an accusing finger at miss. "'er with 'er himitation—"

Jimmie fixed his stern gaze on miss. Miss tossed her head, but began to look vaguely uneasy.

"And ridin' with my old friend, 'er lydyship too," said Old Sweetheart.

Jimmie started slightly. That was a bit thick—still he had seen the limousine with his own eyes.

"'er lydyship whose 'usband is an old pal of yours, Jimmie," went on Old Sweetheart.

"Old pal?" stammered Jimmie.

"'im we lived with, altogether, cozy-like, a 'appy family, with Some Lung, as 'e plyefully called it, the dog and the balloons, not to mention 'im w'ot was always bringin' my little tot from a 'igh-class pub"—with emphasis—"where they had lydies from Piccadilly, and gents, with 'igh 'ats—"

By this time Old Sweetheart was so breathless she was forced to stop while she reached for the little tot.

"Sure I remember 'is lordship, me old pal," said Jimmie, with extreme carelessness. "So it was 'er lydyship you was ridin' with?" Jimmie didn't

believe a word of it, but now he yawned nonchalantly. "Yes, yes, you would be!" Another yawn! "A little bit of w'ot Old Darlin' is 'avin', miss," he observed. "Though I sye it 'asn't a right proper 'bokay' to me." Jimmie had heard his lordship refer to a wine's "bokay."

"Stick to the bitter-beer, Jimmie," implored Old Sweetheart.

"I 'as that bitterness in my 'eart," said Jimmie, "I 'ates the name of *bitter-beer*. I'll tyke a bit of the widow's comfort."

"I 'as promised 'er lydyship to sign the pledge," said Old Sweetheart. "'ow would it be if you, Jimmie, signed instead?"

"Wouldn't do at all!" said Jimmie hastily.

"It's a mother's 'eart that's speakin', Jimmie."

"You keep your promise to 'er lydyship, yourself," said Jimmie with rather more emphasis than was necessary.

"And this is 'im, my hangel-child!" said Old Sweetheart, pointing a reproachful finger at Jimmie. "'ere's gratitude," she wailed. "If Mr. 'iggins was 'ere—"

"'iggins?" said Jimmie, with a guilty start.

"'e wouldn't be denyin' of me my little tot," said Old Sweetheart, shaking her head sadly. "'e

was that kind and thoughtful! I can 'ear 'im now." With dreamy retrospection. "'ave another, do!"

Jimmie gazed around apprehensively.

"Don't be talkin' of 'iggins," he said hoarsely.

"It ayn't safe."

"But 'im, in his gryve, this thirty years and more!"

"'e ayn't in his grave. 'e's alive," said Jimmie.

"'e's in the horspital."

"The horspital?" cried Old Sweetheart, startled in spite of herself.

"That is, *one* of 'im is," said Jimmie.

"One of 'im?" stammered Old Sweetheart. "Is they two of 'im?"

"They is," said Jimmie bitterly.

"Two of 'im!" repeated Old Sweetheart. "Is this seein' double?" She addressed the "little tot."

"One of 'im's in the horspital, with yellow dog."

"You're sure it's only a yellow dog—not snykes and things?" murmured Old Sweetheart. "Mybe I won't be arskin' you to sign that pledge, Jimmie. Mybe I'll be signing of it myself."

"You?" said Jimmie, staring.

"Me! Two of 'im!" she repeated wonderingly.

"And I'd 'a' swore I saw the one of 'im tucked away, snug and comfortable, in 'is gryve! I 'as

'eard"—staring hard at Jimmie—"of a man w'ot was supposed to be tucked away, who wasn't. But I 'asn't never 'eard, before, of any one coming to life, double hisself! Two 'igginses from one 'iggins that was tucked away, is 'ard to believe, Jimmie. It's 'earin' double, and seein' double, and mybe"—shaking her head dolorously—"I'll 'ave to sign the pledge for 'er lydyship. It's cruel 'ard—and me, a widow—I'll 'ave another tot, miss! And a harf jiggerful more than larst time! A werry poor gin, Jimmie."

"Werry!" said Jimmie.

"As if a drop of water 'ad got into it by mis-tyke! Nothink like the gin in the 'igh-class pub, where the lydies from Piccadilly Circus comes in, and the gents sit around in 'igh 'ats!"

"Hello!" said a cheery voice behind them, interrupting the tart response, trembling on the lips of the resentful young lady behind the bar. "I was looking for you, Jimmie. Been to I couldn't tell you how many places in this neighborhood!"

"For me?" Jimmie turned with a guilty start; then looked relieved. It was only his old American "pal." "W'ot ye want?" he said rather sulkily, almost suspiciously.

"Your help!—Or, rather her ladyship does!"

"Her ladyship!" said miss, and perked up her ears.

"I believe you were with his lordship last," said the American.

"I was," said Jimmie, sticking out his chest, and looking at miss very haughtily.

"Well, you would oblige her ladyship, if you could tell her where his lordship is to be found?"

"Lordships!—Ladyships!" Miss's eyes opened wider.

"I took leave of 'is lordship werry shortly—werry shortly ago," said Jimmie impressively. "We parted with mutual regrets. Mutual regrets, I may say!" he repeated.

"Where did you leave his lordship?"

"Where?—where?" Jimmie stuck his fingers in his button-holes. "It were a large building—a werry large building—"

"I think we had better go to her ladyship, at once," said the American.

"Oh, werry well," said Jimmie indifferently, as if hobnobbing with titles were a mere bagatelle with him.

"Better hurry! Come along!"

"All right! You'll excuse me, miss?" observed Jimmie with overwhelming politeness.

But miss's lips refused an answer; miss looked as if she were past answering.

"Present my compliments to 'er lydyship, and tell 'er I'll be thinkin' of the little matter she was good enough to mention to me," said Old Sweetheart.

"Werry good—werry good," said Jimmie. "'er lydyship will be glad to 'ear."

"No doubt!" laughed the American. "Her ladyship will be relieved. We'll go to her house. She certainly will be glad to see you."

"I should 'ope so," said Jimmie, holding up his head. "Good-by, Old Sweetheart."

"*Old Sweetheart?*" said the American. "This isn't *the*—?" He paused! So here was where Jimmie went sweethearting? And those vivid and picturesque narrations of ardent young Hebes pinning for Jimmie, and love's tenderest dalliance, were all "in your eye." Here was the bower-d'amour. Again the American laughed. But Jimmie was too much occupied with his new-found dignity, as a friend of lords and ladies, to notice.

"'er lydyship's chariot—I means, limousine, don't 'appen to be wyting houtside for us, I suppose?" he observed carelessly.

"No," said the American.

"Oh, well," said Jimmie, "I ayn't too proud to tyke a bus—on occasions!" He implied, by his accent, *rare* occasions.

"So 'eavenly, ridin' in her lydyship's limousine!" exclaimed Old Sweetheart. "Just like *floatin'* along—through 'eaven, or somethink!"

"Well, *we'll* have to be floating along," said the American. "But you haven't yet introduced me to this lady." Indicating Old Sweetheart.

Jimmie performed the ceremony with dignity, adding: "'er lydyship's particular friend!"

"Have a little tot!" urged Old Dearie beamingly.

"No, thanks!" laughed the American. "We really must be off."

"We can 'ave one with 'is lordship," added Jimmie at the door.

"In the '*igh*-class pub, where the lydies from Piccadilly comes floatin' in, all dressed in fine furs, and *real* diamonds!" called out Old Sweetheart, but by this time the two oddly assorted pals were beyond hearing.

"It's such a comfort to oblige 'er lydyship," murmured Old Sweetheart, addressing the now almost paralyzed young lady behind the bar.

“Speakin’ of which”—and incidentally forgetting all about the two ’igginses and her recent laudable resolution—“speakin’ of which—I’ll tyke another little tot!”

CHAPTER XXII

HER ladyship had left the young American in her car, when she had gone in to see the family solicitor, but when she returned with the latter gentleman, she found the American gone.

"The gentleman said to explain to your ladyship that he would go about on his own hook," explained the driver of the car. "He said he had a 'hunch'—whatever that may mean!"

"Sounds aboriginal!" said the solicitor.

Her ladyship hurriedly explained. "He's an American, and he was his 'pal.' He nursed him and helped him get out—escape, I mean! They endured all manner of hardships together. He was a ne'er-do-well and the son of an American millionaire, and has since 'made good.' And he's been very good to his lordship"—breathlessly—"and it was he who tried to help his lordship, and got in jail, instead—"

"Bless my soul!" said the attorney. "This is rather a complicated business. Then we have his evidence, too, that his lordship *is* in the land of the living?"

"Yes, yes; did I not tell you?"

"You did not."

"I suppose I was too much interested in what *you* were telling me."

"Probably! But more of this later!" He turned to the driver. "What else did this interesting American gentleman say when he left?" he asked that person.

"He said he wanted to find some one called Jimmie, who he believed might furnish the information your ladyship desired. If he learned anything, he said he would communicate with your ladyship."

"Yes, yes!" said her ladyship. "Meanwhile?" Her eyes shone with impatience.

"I was about to suggest," said the solicitor, "a visit to the principal hospitals! As he's a bit out of sorts, and rather flighty, that's where he might have been taken."

"By whom?" said her ladyship.

"By Jimmie! We do not know where to look for Jimmie; the young American probably has an idea; meanwhile, we do what we can."

Her ladyship assented at once, and they started immediately on their quest, only to meet with more disappointment. No one answering the description

of him whom they sought could be found at the public institutions. They, at length, paused in front of the last hospital the solicitor could think of. A new attendant there, however, was positive the one they inquired about had not been received. He did not dream of associating that poor derelict by the name of Henry Higgins, with one of her ladyship's distinguished presence, and so, he overlooked mentioning that one Henry Higgins had been taken in, escorted hither by another nondescript gent, by name of Higgins also. Had the somewhat pompous attendant mentioned the name of Higgins, her ladyship's mind would, at least, have been jolted by curiosity—for had not the little cockney who had returned Some Lung told her *he* was called Higgins? That magical name of Higgins would, at least, have served as a connecting link.

As it was, she turned away dejectedly, and had left the place, when her eye fell upon a little yellow dog—a dog that had tried to enter when they came out, and which had been prevented from doing so by the attendant.

“Get out, you!” said the attendant gruffly to yellow dog.

“Oh!” said her ladyship, gazing at yellow dog.

"What is it?" said the solicitor, as the door closed on them.

"Look!" she said, pointing to yellow dog.

He did. Yellow dog had once more taken his position on the door-step, his nose pointed at the door-knob, and he was waiting patiently, for another opportunity to bolt inside.

"Do you see that?" said her ladyship.

"I see a little yellow dog."

"I think I know that dog."

"You do?"

"I think it may have belonged to *him*!"

"Eh?"

"Open the door!"

"You think he—?"

"It is possible." Her ladyship's voice betrayed excitement.

The solicitor started to open the door and yellow dog began at once to get excited.

"This seems to be a case of following not your own nose, but that of little yellow dog," murmured the man of law.

"Yes, yes!" said the lady.

He opened the door and little yellow dog rushed in.

"I feel rather foolish," said the solicitor.

"No, no!" said the lady. "Follow!"

They did, though he raised his hands with mild expostulation. In all his legal experience he had not had a case like this one.

There was a slight howl within. "What did I tell you?" The attendant was indignantly addressing yellow dog. "Of all the measly, persistent animals, you're—"

"Do not turn him out!" said her ladyship.

"We wish to follow," said the eminent lawyer, looking supremely foolish.

"It's only a miserable mongrel, your ladyship," said the attendant rather resentfully, "who insists upon getting on the couch and licking the face of a poor relic of humanity called Higgins!"

"Higgins?" said her ladyship, with a puzzled look. "Strange! If you don't mind?"

"Oh, very well, your ladyship," he said wearily. 'After all, her ladyship was a person of prominence in the social and hospital world, and had to be humored.

"Let him go," said the eminent solicitor, with a blithe wave of a pudgy hand toward yellow dog. 'After all, it was a red-letter day, and a bit of fool-

ishness—besides, one must be tolerant with one's very influential clients!

Yellow dog with a wild yelp led the way. They followed, less speedily, and sans demonstration—her ladyship with puzzled bright eyes, as if she was repeating to herself: "Higgins! Higgins!"; the solicitor, with a slightly silly, apologetic expression; and the attendant with a sour look that said as plainly as could be: "Most demoralizing this, to the routine of a great hospital! And if her ladyship weren't one of the principal patronesses, etc."

They paused, for yellow dog had rushed to a certain cot.

"That's Higgins!" said the attendant.

Yellow dog let out a howl—but not of joy—while her ladyship and the solicitor gazed at the cot in consternation.

"Why, he's gone," said the attendant blankly. And truly the cot was empty!

"I heard him, mutterin' about a prison-camp, and escapin'," said the weak voice of a patient near by. "But I didn't think no more about it and went to sleep. Heard him syin' over and over how he'd got to get away from the Huns!"

Her ladyship wrung her hands.

"He kept mutterin' about diggin' a tunnel, when he wasn't complainin' about the 'straw-soup,' as he called the lovely nourishin' broth," went on the weak voice. "And it's my opinion he thinks he had the tunnel all dug and has made a bolt of it."

"In his pajamas!" groaned the attendant, thinking not of her ladyship, or her disappointment, but of the scandal to the institution.

But it was discovered later that the "escaped prisoner" had taken an overcoat and a few other articles of clothing from a closet, where such garments were kept, and donning the same, he had probably managed to slip out of one of the side entrances. The exasperated attendant explained that you couldn't keep an eye all the time, on every charity patient in the men's ward, and that sometimes the patients were allowed a bit of exercise in their pajamas or bath-robcs. Mr. Higgins, or his lordship, had taken advantage of this circumstance; undoubtedly he had displayed considerable cunning, to outwit his Hun captors (hospital guard) and, presumably, was well on his way by this time toward the Dutch frontier which might be anywhere in London. Explanations might relieve the hospital attendant's feelings, but they didn't improve or alter the situation. Mournfully, her ladyship

and the solicitor left the building, followed by a disconsolate-looking little yellow dog which, having lost his lordship, attached himself now to her ladyship, with irrevocable determination.

“Scotland Yard,” said the solicitor to the driver. And as they reentered the car, yellow dog got in, too.

It was nurse's evening off-duty, and she employed it in characteristic fashion; when nurse wasn't attending spiritualistic meetings, or listening to the weird experiences of recitals of mediums, she found pleasure and edification in gathering a choice circle of her friends and kindred spirits—Researchers, they called themselves—around the festive board—holding hands, on the rap-tapping table. Especially had she found enjoyment in this manner of entertainment since Joggins had encountered a possible non-fleshly likeness of his lordship, near ~~the~~ the baby's cradle. Joggins had not communicated to her his subsequent skepticism in the matter, having imparted his later confidences and opinions, alone, to the solicitor. But what Joggins thought would have been of little moment to nurse who was a confirmed believer in spirits. To-night they had had “wonderful” manifestations.

The spirits were "very strong"—very! The little circle could hardly hold the table down; first, it seemed to want to do a horn-pipe and then to throw itself into a mad Highland-fling. Even Jog-gins watched the table with uncanny interest; that table was certainly misbehaving in a very reprehensible manner, for a staid and respectable article of furniture, in an eminently staid and respectable household.

"It's the spirit of his lordship, I'm sure," said nurse.

"It's a very strong spirit anyhow!" they sighed.

"Is it his lordship's spirit?" some one asked.

"Yes," came the taps.

"Ah!" said the nurse.

"Are you happy, in spirit-land?"

"Yes," came the answer.

"Do you come back here, sometimes—to this house?"

"Yes."

"Could you appear, so that any one could see you?"

"Yes."

And at that moment something very strange indeed happened. The side door opened and his lordship walked in. He didn't seem to see any of

them, and his eyes had an unusual glitter. Without a word, he walked by—on, on!—and out of the room! He was very furtive and glidey in his manner—probably thinking he was near to crossing the Dutch frontier, and of the extreme need for care and caution. Those glittering eyes had peered this way and that—on the lookout for brutal sentinels, no doubt; then lifting his feet, as if he might be walking through a marsh, or stepping over a ditch, he was gone. The little select circle were too paralyzed to move. Only Joggins had the courage to steal out of the room after his lordship.

The latter went up-stairs, to his own bedroom, and sat down—though whether he thought in Holland or not, who shall say.

“Welcome home, your lordship!” faltered Joggins.

His lordship put a hand to his forehead. “Why, you look like Joggins,” he said.

“I am Joggins,” said Joggins.

“But I haven’t crossed the Channel yet,” said his lordship, apparently greatly puzzled.

“Oh, yes, you have! Welcome home, your lordship!”

His lordship looked around. “Where’s the heavenly footprints?” he said.

"Which?" said Joggins.

"And the loaves and fishes, from Heaven?"

"Your lordship shall have both," said Joggins joyfully. "And the fatted calf, and anything else your lordship wants!"

"Fine!" said his lordship. Then he yawned. "Believe I could do a kip!"

"There's your lordship's bed," suggested the happy Joggins.

His lordship got up and Joggins put him to bed. And as he did so, Joggins reflected joyously that his lordship, though thin enough, in all conscience, was *not* thin enough to be thin air.

"Didn't know Dutch dirt could be so soft," muttered his lordship.

"Very soft," said the devoted Joggins.

"They ought to be going around," said his lordship.

"What?" said the blissful Joggins.

"Windmills," said his lordship, still in Holland. Then he sighed. "We did it—dash, dash if we didn't!"

"What?"

"Escaped!"

Her ladyship came in very wearily, with the

solicitor endeavoring to encourage her. Downstairs came Joggins!

"His lordship has come home!" announced Joggins. "He is up-stairs now—in his room!"

This time her ladyship fainted in the arms of the family solicitor! And as the latter sustained her ladyship, he was aware that a certain matter he had intended to lay before her ladyship was again postponed.

CHAPTER XXIII

A FORTNIGHT later, his lordship lay on a couch of state, his surroundings being quite an improvement over those of his late domicile with Some Lung, yellow dog and Old Sweetheart. He reposed amid somber magnificence and luxury. Some Lung occupied the cradle de luxe; the balloons were fastened to the kingly couch, and yellow dog lay on a peerless Persian rug. Yellow dog didn't seem to mind as long as he could look up occasionally, and wink an off-eye at his master. Some Lung, too, appeared almost as contented as when he had luxuriated, not always with a clean face, in that old dirty, disreputable, but dear domicile, to which he had been magically transported, on a certain memorable day, when nurse's back had been turned.

His lordship was still off "his bally top," as Jimmie would have put it. Witness the balloons—the presence of Some Lung and yellow dog! His lordship wanted them all in his immediate proximity, and the only way to keep his lordship quiet was to yield to his request. Otherwise, his lordship

became very excitable, and the fever mounted higher. They tried to remove the silly-looking balloons, but his lordship acted as if somebody was trying to rob him, and became so wild they tied the silly things to the massive carved posts once more, and his lordship, with a glance at Some Lung and yellow dog—to see if they were still there—sank back with a silly, peaceful smile on his emaciated countenance. Given his own way, in these three trifling matters, and his lordship was very easy to get on with! He was a model patient and made no trouble for any one as his wants seemed few. He just seemed to like to lie there and sleep, save when by some curious mental process his brain reverted to the old courtship days, and he started to woo her ladyship, all over again.

This was rather trying to her ladyship, under the circumstances, but she bore up under it, endeavoring not to listen, and only “do her duty,” as every English woman should toward one who had fought and suffered for king and country—and her! She endeavored to apply logic to a somewhat anomalous situation, and, in a measure, succeeded. At any rate, his lordship, so long neglected, was now very well looked after. In those days, her ladyship lived on a very exalted plane, telling herself

she was animated only by solicitude. A certain, large, legal-looking envelope, from the family solicitor, she had suffered to remain unopened; it, doubtlessly, contained papers relating to the old disagreeable affair, and she wished to forget, as much as possible, about that now. At least, she wished to be reminded of it as little as possible at present! Pity for his lordship, as he rambled on, like an instrument out of tune, moved her. He seemed like a broken reed; one who had been grievously dealt with!

He was "talking away" to himself and her one day (how oddly convincing his words rang!) when Joggins announced a lady visitor who refused to send up her name. Puzzled, her ladyship went down. A young woman with peroxide hair, looking somewhat frail and with bright spots of red on her cheeks, awaited her ladyship.

"Miss Frizzie Vantyle!" said the caller, without preliminary.

Her ladyship looked at her; there was a long pause; then her ladyship said, very slowly:

"Will you be seated?"

Miss Frizzie sat down. "I am off to France to do my bit, your ladyship," she said at once, "cheerin' up the Tommies with a song and dance,

and something comic, you know! They tell me I'm getting pretty bad, in the business"—with a strained smile—"but the Tommies won't mind! They'll stand for me, and I'll give them all I has left to cheer them up! It ayn't much, but maybe it'll be welcome!

"And now, your ladyship," went on Frizzie more rapidly, after this seemingly irrelevant preamble, "I'm comin' to what I called for! Fyce the music, sye I!" Frizzie breathed quickly; she spoke as if to get "it" off her mind. "I've been a proper rotter, I has! And it was all—a frame-up! You know what that is?" Her ladyship didn't; it was obvious she could only surmise; her eyes dilated somewhat.

"Notoriety! — fame! — ambition!" — ejaculated Frizzie feverishly. "W'ot I needed was talk—colyums in the daily press! 'You get that, an' I'll make a top-notch of you!' says he w'ot had the business handling of me. He didn't care how—your ladyship doesn't know his kind!—a fourth-rate greasy manager! But his words sounded like holy script to me." Her ladyship did not speak; at the moment, Frizzie seemed to resemble a poor tricked-out doll! Her voice was high-pitched—pathetic. "I had the looks then," she went on,

"and it was a temptation! Besides, I had a friend—a gentleman friend"—with a slight ring of defiance—"your ladyship is shocked." Her ladyship's looks expressed nothing of the kind; she was otherwise absorbed. "He was a Sir, too—had a high hat, and all the lardy-da, but I called him old Mustard-Pot and that's what he was! A little worse than me! Stick by a friend, sye I! But would he? Not him! Or his friend's *wife*?"—Frizzie's eyes were deep—cat-like; they gleamed behind a fuzz of hair, upon her ladyship.

"So I 'ad the idea from both sides," she went on, with a laugh that sounded unnatural and nervous. "The greasy manager, with his guff about head-liner and five-hundred a week; and old Mustard-Pot, with w'ot he'd do after—" She looked at her ladyship and her words trailed away. "I didn't never 'ave nothink to do with him—'is lordship! Not that I'm settin' *my* virtue on any pedestal. Maybe I would have,—if—oh, I've 'ad gentlemen friends, and plenty of them! And I ayn't sying as to the future. But he didn't tyke to me—

"A bit wild he was with his drinkin', but who wasn't, of his kind. It was old Mustard-Pot who kept bringing him around, where I was like to be, and who kept fillin' him with the fizz, which, being

young, he fell for! And once he—old Mustard-Pot—put something in the glass, and doped him—” At this point Frizzie went on rapidly. “Oh, it was easy—just as easy! Shyme to take the money! Only after I got thinking—after he went away—and something about him haunted me!—Something got me here!” Putting her hand to her breast. “It kept getting worse! And now I hear he’s come back, and I’m glad—glad—and I’m going away, and I’m done with that other one!—old Mustard-Pot—forever! And if your ladyship wishes to know who he is, I’ll tell your ladyship.” And Frizzie did!

It had been a chaotic, sordid, extravagant narrative, told in jerks, by fits and starts, but it carried conviction.

“Now I’ve got that off my chest!” said Frizzie inelegantly. “I ayn’t asking your ladyship to try to think kindly of me, and I ayn’t asking that of any one! I has generally got bricks instead of bouquets, and that’s probably why I hasn’t ever cared very much what I done, or how I done it. It’s not a nice world for poor girls w’ot ayn’t respectable, and it ayn’t worth while for them w’ot are! And unless you ’as genius, or good looks w’ot sticks—not of the vanishin’ kind”—with a wan smile—“you better be dead! As long as you can

keep your looks, fresh and handy, you can keep going, with the kindly 'elp of the males, but once said looks start to go, it's good night and farewell! Said males ayn't got no use for the vanishing kind of good looks. Only I think I may, somehow, manage to myke the Tommies laugh; I has heard they ayn't so particular—not havin' much in the amusement line!—and especially as they won't 'ave to pay!

“And that,” added Frizzie, “I think is all. And I'm off! The lawyer has a little affidavit he called it, bearin' on what I has said, and which I has signed, and you has probably got the syme, by now.” Her ladyship, with a start, thought of the official-looking document she had not opened.

“The lawyer said there was no need for me to call here, but fyce the music, sye I! And I have—and good-by!”

Frizzie got up and moved toward the door. At the moment, her appearance was worn and weary.

“Will you not stay—while I send you a cup of tea?” said her ladyship mechanically.

Frizzie turned and looked at her. “Now that's nice of you!” she said, and walked out.

Long her ladyship sat alone. It was Joggins who, some time later, disturbed her reverie.

"His lordship is arsking for your ladyship, begging your ladyship's pardon," he said. "He's still out of his head!"

"Very well, Joggins," said her ladyship, and arose quickly. "I'll go at once!" And the expression on her face brought Joggins joy.

A few days later, Sir George, ignorant of Frizzie's visit to her ladyship, ventured to call at the big house and was received by Joggins. "Her ladyship is not at home," said Joggins, who had received instructions what to say.

"No?" said Sir George.

"No," said Joggins, pleasurably aware that her ladyship was at the present moment up-stairs.

"How is the invalid?" said Sir George surlily.

"Wonderfully improved," said Joggins enthusiastically. "Her ladyship is sitting with him."

"Oh!" said Sir George. "She is at home, but engaged!"

"Quite so," said Joggins.

Sir George hesitated. From casual inquiry he had heard his lordship was very ill—might die—in which case Sir George would not mourn. Perhaps there was still hope—a rich widow—and what all, he felt as if the other had, originally,

him (Sir George) of her. A little revenge! He had almost had it in his hand—maybe, with patience, he would yet—

“You will extend my sympathy, Joggins,” he murmured sedulously.

“Thank you, sir!”

“And my congratulations!” After all, it was only pity she probably felt for the other—a species of war-exaltation, or half-hysteria. Women caught it, these days.

“Thank you, sir.” Joggins made a funny sound in his throat.

Sir George stared hard at him a moment, and then left.

“I think,” ruminated Joggins, gazing after the departing visitor, “he is yet to hear a bit of news.”

Which surmise was correct. Truth to tell, her ladyship had so far put Sir George out of her mind, these later days, that for her he had, practically, ceased to exist. And the family solicitor had been quite content to bide his time, in acquainting Sir George with what he had learned about that estimable gentleman. But to-day, it was decreed Sir George was to hear the “bit of news,” not, indeed, from her ladyship or the solicitor, but from another quarter.

Sir George had been both nonplussed and surprised when he had learned of the sudden and seemingly inexplicable departure from town of the sprightly Frizzie. There had been food for thought in the abrupt flitting, without communicating with him, of that young lady to parts unknown, from the hitherto congenial atmosphere of the little bohemian thoroughfare. What did it mean, Sir George had frequently asked himself? He was now to learn. Upon arriving at his apartments, after the futile effort he had made to see her ladyship, Sir George found on his dresser, a letter awaiting him from Miss Frizzie, and a little present—nothing more nor less than a mustard-pot!

Sir George regarded the mustard-pot with puzzled eyes and then frowningly read the letter. It was on Red Cross stationery; Miss Frizzie now was an angel of mercy, by her own statement, and had repented of her sins. As Sir George continued to peruse the affecting, and curious, little epistle he turned first a furious red and then a sickly yellow. There was the usual woman's post-script, after she had told Sir George all about the affidavit and her visit to her ladyship.

"You arsked me, why that little pet term of

endearment—'old mustard-pot'? And what is the meaning of the same?

"Bless its dear sweet little heart, that's easy! It's American, dearie!

"Yellow? Ha, ha! All yellow! Catch on?

"Excuse the compliment, and send any spare change to the Red Cross. Ta, ta! The soldiers *think* I am an angel. I nurse and give entertainments, and when they're feeling real bad—some of the wounded—I hums them comic songs. It's nice to be thought an angel, and I sometimes feels like one—all snow-white, and wanting only to be good. Oh, so good! How you will laugh when you read this, old Mustard-Pot, but it's true, s'welp me! So just run along, and say your prayers, old top—Ta! ta! Your affectionate and doting—"

Sir George put down the note and said things. The mustard-pot was on the mantel, and as he gazed at it, he saw the reflection of his own face in the mirror behind. And he seemed to hear Miss Frizzie's mocking voice: "If the pot fits, put it on!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE American and Jimmie took rooms more to the liking of the former than their other apartment had been. Pending the adjustment of that back-pay proposition, both had been willing to accept a little temporary financiering from his lordship. Meanwhile, her ladyship had insisted upon settling that insurance matter to the satisfaction of Old Sweetheart and the company, and Jimmie could now come to life again, in his own proper person, and shed, forever, the odious name of Higgins! Now that his lordship had come to life and Jimmie was undergoing an honorable process of resurrection, the American would soon be the only ghost left. He was beginning to feel lonesome in advance; three ghosts aren't so bad; but one, all by yourself, is different.

"How'd you find his lordship?" he inquired one day, some time later, as Jimmie entered their room after a visit of inquiry to the big house.

"Fine! Gettin' 'is pep back again!" answered Jimmie.

"That's good!"

Jimmie bent over the other, confidentially. "'er lydyship and 'im are like two turtle-doves!"

"Better still!" With a laugh.

"And now, everythink being lovely for every one, I 'ave a very pressing engagement, and I don't suppose you'll be mindin' if I leaves you, for a few days?"

"Not at all," said the other who was, at that moment, engaged in sorting out a very voluminous mass of correspondence on a table. "What sort of an engagement have you?"

"I ayn't syin'," said Jimmie, with a smirk, "or where I'm goin'!"

"All right!" said the American. "Though from your tone, I should say you were about to embark upon some very reprehensible enterprise!"

"Meanin' somethink sinful?" said Jimmie.

"Something like that!"

"I 'opes I 'asn't said anythink that's incriminatin'!" said Jimmie earnestly. "Anythink incriminatin' to 'er, I mean!"

"No; you've been very tactful and discreet."

"I 'opes so!" Jimmie heaved a sigh. "I'd 'ate to 'ave any one think—"

"What?" As Jimmie paused.

"Anythink himproper, you know! Like a left-

'anded 'oneymoon, for hinstance! With a beautiful young lady—"

"Not the one you've always been talking about?" said the American dryly.

"I ayn't syin'! Mybe it might be 'er, and mybe it might be another. And mybe it's the sea-shore we're goin' to, and mybe it ayn't!"

"Naughty!" said the American, with a whimsical smile, still busy with his correspondence.

"'ow can I 'elp it?" said Jimmie hoarsely. "Mybe it's 'er that's a-urgin' of it!—who will 'ave it, 'er bein' that fond of me! Mybe I can't get out of it!"

"Will power; superior masculine moral strength!" said the American.

"Mybe I 'as a weakness that wye!" confessed Jimmie miserably. "I can't 'elp it! Mybe I 'as talked with 'er and told 'er as 'ow it would be 'ighly himproper! W'ot did 'er sye? I arsk you!"

"Don't ask me," said the American. "I have troubles of my own!"

"W'ot you been hup to?" said Jimmie, glancing at the table. "Sellin' 'air-restorer?"

"To pass the time, I put a 'lonely-soldier' ad. in the paper, with instructions to send answers to me, care the American Express Company. I

said I hadn't a friend in the world." With a laugh.

"'as you now?"

"This is only part of the first instalment. There have since arrived three bushels of letters and several tons of parcels. The Express Company has blessed me, and requested me to cut off the bombardment, but what am I to do? Looks as if I had started a kind of an endless-chain!"

"Humph!" said Jimmie, sniffing loftily. "They'd myke *me* lonesomer! Them lonely 'stabs'! All left-overs—not a beauty among the lot of 'em! Last of the pickin's, I call 'em—that desperate they'd 'ave any one! In my plyce"—haughtily—"I'd chuck the lot of them!"

"Perhaps I expect to," said the American, with a laugh. "Just a case of doing something—*pour passer le temps!*—while waiting to get fit for the dug-outs, and all that, once more! I am just kind of curious, you know—that's all! Study in human nature!"

"You 'as my best wishes," said Jimmie, in that same lofty tone.

"Oh, I'm not really looking for a 'lonely stab,'" laughed the other. "I wouldn't know what to do with her, if I got her."

"Bloomin' poor pickin's, if you did!" said Jimmie. "Them 'stabs' is like bayonets, all sharp points, and thin as 'ell! That's why they calls them 'stabs.' And they don't myke love to you—at least, w'ot *I* calls myking love!—They 'urts you! Lonely 'at-pins, I'd call them! Or needles *and* pins"—glancing at the table—"there's so many of 'em! Like puttin' your hand in a bramble-bush, I should sye! Or coming a cropper on a 'edge of prickles! Leastwise, they're not *my* style!"

"I imagine not," said the American dryly. "What *is* your style?" he added, reaching amid that epistolary bramble-bush.

Jimmie smacked his lips. "Plums," he said, "ripe and plump, and ready to drop in your 'and!"

Then he started. "I 'opes I 'asn't said anythink incriminating?" he murmured hoarsely, thereby giving the impression he was thinking of one who fully answered that felicitous description of young womanhood.

"No; I don't think you have incriminated any one, in particular," said the American dryly.

Jimmie breathed harder. "I ayn't syin' when I'll come back," he said, reaching for his hat. "That will depend!"

"On what?"

"'er!" said Jimmie with rapt look. "And I ayn't syin' where we're goin'!"

"Well, *bon voyage!*" said the American. "Or, perhaps I should add: *bon voyage d'amour!*"

"She 'as a bit of French in 'er!" said Jimmie, with a smirk. And departed.

But as he went down, a man came up, and knocked on the door.

"Where's the 'lonely-soldier,' without a friend?" he called out.

The door opened. Both men stared at each other.

"I think you're the bird I'm after," said the intruder. "I'm from Scotland Yard. You've given me a lot of trouble, young man! Wait!" As the American made a movement. "Don't start anything till I get through! Your father is in London." The other started. "I know something about the row you had, and listen to me—he wants to make up. He isn't the harsh, hard, unnatural father you think him. He may have some of the—ahem!—firmness of the millionaire class, and a way of expressing himself—" The American smiled faintly. "But he's come over here to find you, if he could. He hoped you would eventually turn up—like others, reported officially dead. And listen, son!—I think

he's rather proud of you. It was only by accident I got in touch with you—your little appearance in the police court gave me the clue—that dead-man stuff, to the magistrate—a dead give-away! His Majesty's government isn't going on harboring any ghosts—you get that!"

The American smiled. "Will you come with me, peaceably or otherwise?" went on the man. "My instructions are to get you."

"You say he is waiting—wants to see me?" the other asked, with a sudden quickening of his look.

"Yes."

"Then I'll go—peaceably!"

But as he went, he looked around, an expression half glad, half whimsical on his face; a few moments ago, he had been wondering if he would not be lonesome, in his solitary phantom state. Now that question was answered. The last of the three ghosts had come to life!

CHAPTER XXV

THE American approached his lordship's house. He was now immaculately dressed and carried himself with new swing and spirit. "I wonder," he mused, as he mounted the front steps, "what has become of Jimmie? I should like to see him, too, before sailing for home." A footman, in a brand new uniform, received him. The American stared; then a grin overspread his face.

"Why, it's Jimmie!" he said.

"Nyme, please?" said the little cockney, elevating his nose.

"So this is really what has become of you?" laughed the caller.

"I 'as put off the matter I spoke to you about," said Jimmie, "much to the disappointment of the other party concerned. You see, 'er lydyship 'ad told the bobby I was 'er footman, and didn't I 'ave to myke 'er lydyship's words true?"

"Even at the expense of—disappointing the other party?" queried the American, whereupon Jimmie had the grace to blush.

They found his lordship, convalescent, in a

great chair, surrounded by Some Lung, yellow dog and a lot of tin-soldiers and toy-artillery. Whiz!—bang!—the American dodged something from Some Lung's pop-gun.

"Ha!" cried his lordship. "Salute, you little tyke!" Some Lung tried to, but fell over and got a bump. "Don't ask how I am? Fitter every day! What with the nursing I get—"

"'er lydyship is a' hangel!" said Jimmie devoutly. "Begging your lordship's pardon—" he added hastily.

"Begging nothing!" said his lordship in a disgusted tone. "Isn't he the limit?" Jimmie elevated his nose. "Adores her ladyship and when her ladyship said he was her footman, her footman he would be. But wait till I get out?—make him officer's batman, or something!" Jimmie tried to elevate his nose, but grinned. "Take it off!" commanded his lordship sternly. Jimmie removed the offending coat, with the brass buttons. "Turn it!" said his lordship almost with a hiss. Jimmie promptly turned the coat inside out. "Now sit down and light up!" Jimmie did—with another grin; in fact, they all took out their pipes.

"So you're going back home?" said his lordship to the American.

"Brief visit!—Coming back! You see—" And the American told his story.

Then they smoked silently, happily.

"Good joke on me!" said his lordship, at length. "When I came back here as a bally ghost, I found a man's clothes in one of the closets! Belonged to a brother of her ladyship! Haw! haw!"

"Ho! ho!" said Jimmie.

"Thought I was a bally Enoch Arden! Good joke, eh?"

"Capital!" said the American.

Time sped as they talked, smoked and visited. At length, the American arose, reluctantly, to go.

"When shall we three meet again?" he observed.

"As ghosts?" said Jimmie.

"I hope not," said his lordship, "but"—he passed an arm over the shoulder of each—"pals, always?—Eh? what?"

They reached down and raised the glasses Joggins had placed before them. Their faces were graver.

"Pals always!"

THE END

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